

WJ  
D E I S M  
AND  
CHRISTIANITY

FAIRLY CONSIDER'D,  
In FOUR DIALOGUES.

To which is added a FIFTH upon  
LATITUDINARIAN CHRISTIANITY.

AND  
Two Letters to a FRIEND upon a Book  
Intituled, The MORAL PHILOSOPHER.

---

By \*\*\*\*\*

---

*Clara est, & quæ nunquam marcescit Sapientia,  
& facile videtur ab his qui diligunt eam, &  
invenitur ab his qui quærunt illam.*

SAP. VI. 13.

---

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M DCC XXXIX.



D E I S M

AND

CHRISTIANITY

- FAIRLY COMPARED

IN FOUR DIALOGUES

TO WHICH IS ADDED A LIST OF THE

LATENTLY AND OPENLY CHRISTIAN

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THE  
P R E F A C E.



PON seeing only the  
Title of these Papers,  
some will be apt to say;  
since so many have written  
on those Subjects, why will this Writer  
trouble the World with needless Re-  
petitions?

The Writer may fairly ask a Question  
in his turn, and say; Why do you so  
absolutely suppose there can be nothing  
but Repetitions on those Subjects?

iv      *The P R E F A C E.*

Read the Book before you judge of it, and perhaps you will find you are mistaken. But even supposing you should meet with nothing new in Substance, yet since the *Incredulous* are often repeating their Notions without any farther Novelty than of the Turn and Expression, it is reasonable that *Christians* should be allow'd the like Liberty in maintaining their Belief.

The Method of *Dialogues* is chosen because a great part of my View was to point out, to young *Gentlemen* especially, a ready Answer to such Arguments as are frequently, in these Times, urged in Company; and a proper way of placing the Proofs of *Christianity* in such a Light as might be most suitable in Conversation. And to this purpose  
the

*The* P R E F A C E. v

the Method of *Dialogues* seem'd fittest. Nor can any thing be objected to this Method where the Author does not make one purposely advance weak Things, that the other may triumph in an easy Conquest. And as to any such Imputation I can sincerely say, I have not knowingly omitted or weaken'd any thing, that seem'd to me worth Notice, in what I have either heard or read in favour of *Deists* or *Latitudinarians*. All they say is plainly reducible to the Arguments I have proposed; and I may affirm I have rather added to, than diminish'd any thing of their Force.

I have no more to add to this *Preface*; being well persuaded that the *personal* Excuses of Writers are generally unheeded. As for the Books

A 3                      themselves



vi *The* P R E F A C E.

themselves they are, when publish'd,  
before the Tribunal of the *Publick*.  
There is no Appeal from thence. And  
as all Authors must, infine, so for my  
Part, I shall readily submit to its  
Judgment.



THE



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**D E I S M**  
**A N D**  
**CHRISTIANITY**

**FAIRLY CONSIDER'D, &c.**

**DIALOGUE I.**  
**BETWEEN**  
**CRITOMACHUS and EUDOXUS.**

**CRITOMACHUS.**



**U**PON my coming to Town, I  
heard with Concern, of your  
Confinement to your Room.

**EUDOX.** My Pain at least  
is so far abated, that I can now,  
pretty fully, enjoy the Amusement of read-  
ing, and the Company of Friends. It will

**B**

**be**



be needless to add that I am particularly glad of yours.

CRITOM. Nor can you doubt of the Pleasure on my Side. But I must farther assure you, I shall be particularly glad if I may, without being troublesome, discourse with you upon some Things which have given me of late a good deal of Uneasiness.

EUDOX. Take, dear *Critomachus*, the entire Freedom of a Friend. You shall always find me such, and truly desirous to give you all the Assistance I can.

CRITOM. You have, no doubt, observed that ever since our first Acquaintance, which is now of a considerable standing, I have always waved any Discourses of Religious Controversies. Very sensible how widely I differ'd from you in those Matters, I was apprehensive lest a Declaration of my Notions in those Points, might lessen the Share I had in your Friendship.

EUDOX. Believe me, Sir, I do not flatter myself when I say it is not my Temper, and I am very sure it is no Point of true Religion, to let Differences in this create any Diminution of Charity or Friendship.

CRITOM. Such was my Opinion of you in the main; and I verily think, that  
what

what I call'd being apprehensive of lessening your Friendship, was at the Bottom an Apprehension of being forced to the Trouble of changing my Principles, if I should discuss with you my Notions of Religion. But now, infine, I am determin'd to an Enquiry, whatever may be the Issue.

EUDOX. A Matter of that Consequence well deserves a sincere and full Search.

CRITOM. I had some Thoughts of delaying to speak my Mind 'till *Cleander* return'd from his Uncle, and then to discourse the Matter fully with you both. But since his Absence will be pretty long, and my Uneasiness increas'es, I will make no farther Delay. To be plain then; you know my Father was very indifferent upon the Matter. Hence his Care of my Education, in that Respect, was very little. Nor was he concern'd at my keeping Company with some who were profess'd *Deists*, and others who were inclined to such Notions. Of this Sort I soon became one; rather inclined, than determin'd to *Deism*.

EUDOX. That I take to be the Case even of most of those who profess themselves *Deists*; excepting, perhaps, some of them who are deeply sunk into Immorality. Clouds easily thicken upon such Persons, Passions indulg'd darken their Minds, nor

4 *Deism and Christianity* Dial. I.

is it easy to say how far they may carry their Doubts and their Errors.

CRITOM. In effect, I often observed, that generally they were the *Rakes*, that declared the most openly for those Notions; while others rather hinted at them, than profess'd to espouse them absolutely.

EUDOX. One, with whom I had been acquainted, tho' he was said to be far gone into Immorality, yet was of so great Evenness of Temper, that I could tell him without danger of Offence: If, Sir, you are any thing serious in your Doubts, you cannot think it much that I should desire you to look back, and see when it was you began to be in those Sentiments. They were not the first Sentiments of one born in a Christian Country, and of Christian Parents. Nor did you enter into them all at once; but by Degrees. I will not enquire what Faults may have vitiated your Heart first, and then your Understanding. But sure you are too candid not to own, that it was not in your most *pious* Moments, nor in the most *virtuous* Company, that you commenced *Deist*. Where did you learn to stand up for the Law of Nature only, and oppose all reveal'd Law? Was it not among those, who, by their Discourse and Conduct, seem'd to regard no Law, but what

what might reach them from the Government? Was it not first in Taverns, and among *Rakes*, that your *new Lights*, as you call them, appear'd to you? Were such Places, and such Persons the most likely to lead you into Truth? Was it when you was most free from Vice, or among Persons the most moral, that you began to have those Notions? If otherwise, can you imagine the truest Principles of Nature and Reason would then be best judged of, when you was least fit to judge of any serious Point? You may as well tell me you never saw the Stars so clearly as in the most cloudy Night. Return to a clearer Light, that is, to a better Life, and better Company, and then you may with a better Face begin to tell us of your Discoveries. Thus I spoke to him; To you, *Critomachus*, I must speak very differently, as your Conduct is very different. In you, I am persuaded it was only the want of being well grounded in your Youth, and the Contagion of Company, that made you incline to *Deism*. Nor do I question but a serious Consideration of the Matter will convince you of your Mistakes.

CRITOM. So far, I can assure you, I am already come, that as I will freely propose such Arguments as I have either heard



6 *Deism and Christianity* Dial. I.

or read in Favour of *Deism*, that ever seem'd to me to have any Appearance of Weight, so I will impartially hearken to what you will offer in Favour of reveal'd Religion. ----- As to *Atheism*, it ever appear'd to me so very unreasonable, that I never had the least bent to it. Scarce could I ever believe that any thinking Person could bring himself to a real Doubt of the Being of a God. When we read such a Book as *Livy's History*, it is impossible we should doubt of its being the Work of a sensible Man. Nor can I imagine how a thinking Man can doubt whether this Universe was framed by a wise Being. Men may puzzle themselves and others, by running up into amazing Infinities of Spaces and Ages, and Atoms : But they can never seriously doubt of the World's being the Work of Wisdom, and not of Chance.

X EUDOX. What you mention so justly, minds me of the Turn I gave that Argument in discoursing not long since with a pretended *Atheist*. The curious Gentleman ask'd me a great many Questions about a Voyage to *Italy*, which he found I was reading. Upon observing that he was every now and then flinging out some of his *Atheistical* Hints, I told him, I had a more wonderful Particular to add, than any  
 Thing

Dial. I. *Fairly Consider'd, &c.* 7

Thing I had hitherto told him. Perhaps it will not, continued I, appear so strange to you. Give me leave, however, to ask what you think of the following Account, without naming the Author of it at present. A learned Gentleman, upon viewing the *Vatican* Library, soon gain'd a great Share in the Esteem of the *Librarian*. Accordingly one Day he told him; *Signor Inglese*, upon your Enquiry whence we had these curious *Manuscripts*, my Answer will, perhaps, be surprizing. But as you are a Man of Wit, in whom I confide, I will tell you a Fact which is little known. It is commonly said, that these here were brought from *Germany*, those from *Constantinople*. But the Truth of the Matter is quite otherwise: For in a very long and dark Night, a good many Years since, a prodigious Number of most subtle *Atoms* got within these Walls, danced very briskly about, 'till willing at length to rest a little, they settled here upon the Floor in the Shape of *Volumes*, which being look'd into the next Morning, were found to be these very *Manuscripts*. Here the pretended *Atheist* begg'd me to stop, and tell him no more of such a whimsical Fool of a *Librarian*; adding, that whatever he might think of the *Pope*, he could not suppose he would

have so silly a Man in such a Post. Whereupon I replied, Pray then, Sir, what do you think of those who would pass for Wits by attributing, not the framing of a few *Manuscripts*, but all the Wonders of the Universe to a chance-jumbling of Atoms? He waved the Answer, by an Enquiry in what *Romantic* Author I found that Account. I own'd to him it was only what I had framed, to make the Weakness of his atheistical Scheme appear.

CRITOM. Nothing could more plainly expose the Folly of *Atheism*. A hundred such Suppositions might be made to shew it in such a Light as cannot be resisted. And when I said, that running into infinite Ages and Spaces might puzzle the Understanding, you will easily conceive I only meant, that *Infinity* of any kind is too large a Compass to be fully comprehended by a finite Understanding. But whatever Mazes occur in running as far as we can into Infinities, they can never make it doubtful, but that every limited Being must lead us to an illimitated one; or to a Being that exists essentially, and from which all others have their Being. And, as in Conclusions drawn by Discourse, you must of Necessity come to a first Principle, that cannot be proved by any farther Principle, so all Be-  
ings

Dial. I. Fairly Consider'd, &c. 9

ings suppose a first Being, that cannot have its Being from any other, but must be *self-existent*, as the first Principle of Discourse must be *self-evident*.

EUDOX. Nothing can be more certain. I was therefore always of your Mind, in thinking that there scarce ever was, among Men that can think, any real *Atheist*; and it seems a just Remark, that the Saying of the *Royal Prophet* has a particular Accuracy, where he cries out, that the *Fool said in his Heart, there is no God* \*. It was in his *Heart*, not in his *Understanding*. He might *wish* it, but he could scarce *think* it. For what can be more manifest than that some Beings have their Existence from others. You and I, for Example, from our Parents. It is equally evident, that in the Collection of all Beings, there must be a Being which has its Existence from itself, and from no other. For if it exists from another, the Question will return, from whence that other has its Being; and so *in infinitum*. Proceeding *in infinitum* in Causes depending one from another, and still rising higher and higher, without ever coming to a first Cause, from which all are conceived to flow, as from a Fountain-head,

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\* *Psalms* xiii.



is the same Absurdity, as to conceive Conclusions without a Principle of Discourse, as you was observing. And let the *Atheist* carry the Collection higher and higher as infinitely as he pleases, still of the whole Collection it must be true, that either as to all and every individual of it, it is dependent, or some individual in it is independent. If all the Individuals in the Collection are dependent, it follows, that the adequate Collection is dependent on some Part of itself. For the Collection is not adequately distinct from all its Individuals. But it is evident that nothing can depend of itself, or of any Part of itself, as on the Spring, or Origin of its Being. For whatever is the Origin of a Thing, must first be conceived existent before that whereof it is the Origin, can exist; we must therefore come to a Being which is independent, and from which all the others of the Collection must be derived; that is, to God. Run up the Links of a Chain to infinite Lengths, if every individual Link is dependent of another, and no one independent, it is impossible but the whole Collection must fall. It is equally impossible to conceive a Collection of Beings depending on others, without coming to one that is independent.

Dial. I. *Fairly Consider'd, &c.* 11

CRITOM. If any thing can equal the Absurdity of denying a first independent Cause, or of attributing the Being of the Universe to blind Chance, it is that *Cant* of pretended *Atheists* who attribute the universal Persuasion Men have of a God, to the Prejudices of Education, and the Influence of *Priest-craft*. It is strange if they do not see, that foolish Nursery Stories easily wear off, while the Belief of a God increases as People grow more considerate. And since those Men have generally so mean an Opinion of the *Clergy*, it is wonderful they should, in this, attribute so universal a Force to their Cunning, as to make them an *Over-match* for all the wisest Men in the World. If the Persuasion of a God is wrong, vast indeed must be the Craft of those Men who could raise, and continue it so universally. As to myself, I must own, that how little soever I may for some while have had of any thing more than meer natural Religion, yet I have always suspected a great Weakness in Men who seem to think they have said a fine Thing, when with a Nod of the Head, they have cried out, *Priest-craft*.

EUDOX. I dare venture to affirm there will scarce ever be a Mistake in judging, as you have done, of Men who make such a  
Use

Use of that *Cant* Word. But since you are so well convinced of the Existence of a GOD, let us come to what regards the Worship of that GOD. The Notion of GOD necessarily implies the Idea of an infinitely amiable Being that created us. Consequently, that we are obliged to love him, and to obey his Laws. Thus far, I suppose, you have no Difficulty.

CRITOM. None at all. But then I have for some time thought, or, to speak candidly, have rather wish'd I could bring myself to a justifiable Persuasion, that GOD has given no other Laws but those of Nature; that is, such as we are clearly convinced of by the natural Light of Reason: And that as to reveal'd Laws, or Religions, either none of them are from GOD, or none of them so clearly evidenced to be from him, as to be obligatory to me. There is such a prodigious Number of Religions in the World, that it would be endless to examine them all. Why then may I not stick to the Law of Nature, without entering into a Discussion of pretended Revelations, which are so many, that I cannot hope to end? Can I be obliged by a good GOD to endless Enquiries?

EUDOX. No certainly. And therefore, since it may well be thought endless to examine  
mine

Dial. I. *Fairly Consider'd, &c.* 13

mine all such Claims in particular, it follows, that we cannot be obliged to such a Discussion. But if there is a reveal'd Religion, that bears so clear Marks of coming from God, as to be fully convincing, even without any difficult Enquiry, we must certainly be obliged to the Enquiry, and to embrace that Religion when found out. And such is Christianity, as I doubt not but you will soon perceive by our discoursing the Point with Sincerity, and making our conversing upon it be an Enquiry into Truth, and not a Contest of Wit, such as Disputants often enter upon with a Resolution never to yield.

CRITOM. What I have already declared to you, will, I presume, sufficiently convince you of my Disposition in that Respect.

EUDOX. However, since you seem to have imbibed some Prejudices against reveal'd Religion in general, it may not be improper to premise some Considerations that may in great measure allay, or remove those Prejudices, before we come to the particular Proofs of *Christianity*. And in general, it may well be a strong Inducement to believe that God has given a reveal'd Religion to the World, to observe that there  
is



is no Country wherein People have a Persuasion of some Religion over and above the meer Law of Reason. This may justly convince us it is not an unreasonable Persuasion, since we see, that how widely soever Men have differ'd in their Religions, they have agreed in general, that God has been pleased to reveal some Points beyond what is commonly meant by the Law of Nature.

CRITOM. That there is such a general Persuasion, *Deists* will not commonly deny; but they will say, it is not grounded upon true Reason, but only upon an artful Contrivance of Law-givers, who found the Persuasion of some reveal'd Religion to be not only a very convenient, but even a very necessary *Engine of State*; and most of them own that, as Matters stand with the generality of Mankind, the World could not be well govern'd without it.

EUDOX. A young Gentleman, with whom a Noble Lord desired I would discourse upon *Deism*, was very much in that way of thinking. After the usual Ceremonies between Strangers, he soon own'd himself a *Deist*. Upon my asking him, what sort of *Deist*? He answer'd, of that sort which thinks indeed there is no Religion but that of Nature; yet, continued he, as

I conceive the Religion of Nature cannot be equally deduced by all People through such a full *System* as would be requisite to the good Government of the World, so I readily own, that a Persuasion of some reveal'd Religion is very necessary to fix the Minds and Actions of the Vulgar. Now, *Critomachus*, give me Leave to observe to you, as I did to him, the Inconsistency of of this *Scheme*. It first supposes, that the Persuasion of a reveal'd Religion is at the Bottom false, groundless, and unreasonable. It then adds; that it is however necessary for the right Government of the generality of the World. And what is this (says an ingenious *Spaniard* \*) but to affirm, that reasonable People cannot be reasonably governed, but by an unreasonable Persuasion? Is not this a plain Contradiction? Might you not as well say, that Sicknes is necessary to Health?

CRITOM. To say indeed absolutely, that Sicknes is necessary to Health, carries an Absurdity in the very Terms. Yet it is true that in some Cases, a Sicknes of one kind may carry off a more dangerous one of another kind. And thus, may it not be said, that an unreasonable Persuasion

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\* *Elizalde*. In forma veræ Relig. inveniendæ.

may be required to the well-governing of reasonable Creatures?

EUDOX. My *Spanish* Author was aware of that Reply, and therefore observes, that now and then a Sickness may accidentally carry off such Humours as would otherwise have brought on a more dangerous Dilemper. But considering the Nature of Things, it cannot be necessary that the generality of Men should be sick, in order to be well. And since Reason is the Perfection of Men as such, nothing contrary to Reason can be necessary to their well-being. It appears manifest in the very Terms, that however it may happen *accidentally*, yet in the *stated* Nature of Things, a *Disorder* cannot be absolutely and generally requisite to *Order*. And what is a greater Disorder in reasonable Creatures, as such, than an unreasonable Persuasion? Hence we may justly conclude, that a Belief of a reveal'd Religion is, in general, consistent with Reason, since reasonable People have so generally agreed, that in Fact there is such a Religion; and in being convinced of the Expediency, or even Necessity of such a Religion, as the World stands.

CRITOM. Whatever may be thought of the *Necessity* of such a Persuasion, *Deists* will still say, that considering the Dispositions

tions and Capacities of Men in general, the Persuasion of a reveal'd Religion has great *Conveniences*; which being observed by subtle Law-givers, they contrived that Notion should be instill'd in the first Education of Youth, as the most likely to keep People in awe, and make them more governable.

EUDOX. It is a common and just Comparison, that as shipwreck'd Men will grasp at every floating Weed, so Men in a desperate and sinking Cause will catch at any trifling Reply. And here, before I proceed to any farther Refutation, I would desire you to observe, that what they here say, has more of the *Atheist* than of the *Deist*. This is the rather to be taken Notice of, because as *Deists* value themselves upon rejecting *Atheism*, and upon Consistency in their Reasonings, they should be very careful to avoid such pretended Arguments and Answers as tend to *Atheism*. Now in the present Case, what *Deists* say of reveal'd Religion being only the Effect of artful Education, is precisely just what *Atheists* say of the Belief of a God. And both of them are equally confuted by what has been already said. For it is equally absurd to pretend that an erroneous Persuasion is the most *convenient*, as to say it is *necessary*



*necessary* to the right Government of reasonable Creatures. ----- We may moreover very well desire those Gentlemen would be more particular in so great a Point. Let them tell us who was the ingenious Man, where and when he introduced the Persuasion of a God and Religion. We know who they were that began the Establishment of Laws in great States. It is strange that the Author of those capital Notions, which are the great Grounds of all Laws, should be intirely unknown? Where, and when did those Notions begin? As far as we can trace any History, they were always and every where received. We may ask them again, whether their cunning Lawgivers induced all to believe these Notions by good Reasons, or without them. If with good Reasons, then the Notions themselves are right and reasonable. If without good Reasons, then they must suppose that all People, though naturally inclined to oppose, and examine new Opinions narrowly, especially such as abridge their Liberty, and cross their Passions, yet received the Belief of a God and Religion upon trifling Pretences, tho' against both Reason and Inclination. In a Word, they may as well pretend that originally it was not the Consent of Mankind that *the Whole is big-*

Dial. I. *Fairly Consider'd, &c.* 19

*ger than a Part*, 'till a cunning Philosopher, or *Sophister* broach'd it, and the Nursery and Education carried it round the World.

CRITOM. It appears undeniable from what has been said, that the Consent of Mankind, in believing some reveal'd Religion, is a strong Proof, that it is a grounded Persuasion, and that it is perfectly frivolous to pretend it can be resolved into an artful Contrivance of Law-givers. It is certain on one Hand, that Education has a vast Influence; on the other, it is undeniable, that as to general Principles received universally, it is a Folly to pretend they continue by Education only. It has been already observed, that if the Fear of God, and of a future State, and the Notion of a reveal'd Religion was groundless, it would no more continue generally upon the Minds of Men, than the Nursery Tales of *Raw-head* and *Bloody-bones*. Children have commonly a more early, and more lively Fear of these, than of religious Objects. The only Reason why they sooner get over the Dread in one Case than in the other, nay why Religious Terrors generally continue all their Lives, is because they soon see, that in one Case the Weakness of their tender Imagination was imposed upon, and their  
growing

growing Reason convinces them there was no ungrounded Fiction in the other.

EUDOX. Your Observation is very just. And it may be farther observed, that the generality of Men can no more get over the Notions of God and Religion, in their riper Years, than they can doubt of the first Principles of Reasoning. The more they advance in Judgment, and in Morality, the more they are confirm'd in religious Sentiments. \* Even among those whose Passions make them transgress the Laws of Religion, yet few, very few come to deny, or even to doubt whether there is any Religion at all.

CRITOM. But since Men vary so much in the Religions they hold to be reveal'd, and since it is manifest the greatest Part of them are contradictory, why may not a *Deist* say, that this is a just Ground to suspect there is an Error in the general Principle they have run into, that there is a reveal'd Religion?

EUDOX. Nothing can be more inconsistent than for a *Deist* to pretend it. For as he must maintain against an *Atheist*, that Mens various and inconsistent Notions of a

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\* *Opinionum commenta delet dies, naturæ judicia confirmat. Cic.*

Dial. I. *Fairly Consider'd, &c.* 21

*Deity* are no Proofs that the Belief of a GOD is ungrounded, he must also maintain, that Errors in particular Schemes of Religion, are no Proofs against Religion in general. And both of them should reflect, that as Nature, designing Men for sociable Creatures, has given them the Faculty of Speech, and that therefore no whole Nation is born without it, tho' some Particulars are born mute, and many abuse the Gift of Speech; so Nature has given all Nations Sentiments of Religion, and no whole Nation is without any, tho' some follow false Religions, and others make ill Use of the true one.

CRITOM. Will you then reduce the Notions of Religion to a Sort of *innate Ideas*? Has not Mr. *Locke* sufficiently confuted such Ideas?

EUPHON. Without examining whether there is properly any such thing as *innate Ideas*, or if there is, how far the Notions of a GOD and Religion are such, we may justly conclude from the general Prevalence of them, that they much resemble the Impression we have of first Principles. As therefore in other Sciences one thing is drawn from another, from Principles wherein all agree (whether the Principles are *innate* or *acquired*, is nothing to the Purpose here)



here) so it must also be in the Science of Morality. And in this the generality of Mankind is agreed, as upon an unquestionable Principle, that there is a God and Religion. Hence in all Ages and Nations solemn Oaths (which are solemn Protestations of Religion) have been required in Affairs of Importance, in Treaties of Peace, in Administration of Justice. Whatever difference there may be in particular Religions, all agree in the general Principle of Men being universally convinced of the Ties of Religion. Capable as we are of discoursing and chusing, it is left to us to infer and determine by prudent Consideration upon the Particulars of Religion; the general Principle ever remaining unquestionable amidst all the Varieties of particular Opinions. And hence it is, that altho' whole Nations have changed their Religion, yet never any whole Nation has thought there was no Religion at all. A great Proof that the Persuasion of some Religion is in a Manner naturally impress'd upon the Minds of Men! There could be otherwise no Reason why *Atheism* and *Deism* has not spread as far as *Mahometanism*, since even this does not leave so great a Liberty as the intire discarding of all Religion.

CRITOM. I suppose they would repeat to you again (for I must own I have found them to be full of Repetitions) that the Reason is, because the Persuasion of some Religion is necessary for the *external* Government of all States, and that it is *Policy*, not Reason, that keeps Religion from being quite discarded.

EUDOX. It has often been a Wonder to me, that Men who value themselves upon *Policy*, should not see how great a Weakness it is, to imagine that true Policy can require any thing contrary to Reason. For true Policy is the Art of governing Men, that is, of governing reasonable Creatures. And what can be more evident than that the true Art of governing reasonable Creatures must consist in reasonable Means. Men, as intellectual Creatures, have a natural Love of Truth and Reason. It is therefore highly absurd to say, they would be miserable if they were wise enough to know the Truth, and that they cannot be tolerably happy in a social Life, but by an universal Error. Yet so it is according to these *Macchiavelian* Politick Gentlemen. For by that Position of theirs, it is an Error to believe a Religion; it is that Error that makes Men happy in a social Life; and they would be miserable if they were wise enough to see the

the Error. As to what they say of *External* Government, it will be sufficient to observe, that Religion is much more necessary as to *internal* Acts. For external Rectitude cannot be lasting without the internal. Conscience and Reason, without the Belief of a divine Law, have indeed a *directive*, but little or nothing of a *coercive* Power. They would easily be disregarded, if there was nothing farther to be fear'd. We see too fatally how often they are neglected, how frequently they are stifled, even by those who believe future Punishments, or Rewards, and those eternal.

CRITOM. After all you can say of the general Consent in believing a reveal'd Religion, they will pretend (for I have often heard them) that it is no conclusive Argument; because the generality of the World in that, as in many other things, may run into general Errors: Again, that the generality of the World takes up Opinions without due Examination. And what Weight can be laid upon Numbers embracing any Notions without duly examining the Grounds?

EUDOX. It is granted that the generality of the World, has and will take up a great many wrong Notions, in Matters of Sciences, in which it neither has any Interest,  
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nor an Opportunity or Capacity to examine nicely. But in Things which Men are highly interested to know, and which they may easily know, they do not generally mistake; at least not in the Substance, whatever they may do as to Particulars. Thus in the Substance of the present Point, they easily see the Interest they have in believing a reveal'd Religion. They are convinced of it in the main, tho' as to Particulars they neglect by Carelessness, Passions, and temporal Views, to pursue their Enquiries. Hence many err in adhering to particular Schemes of Religion. But this does not prove they err in the general Principle wherein all agree. Hence the other Part of the Objection (which by the by has again more of the *Atheist* than of the *Deist*) is easily answer'd. It is deny'd the World takes the Notion of a God and Religion without Examination. It is in this, as in Principles of Morality. General Principles of Morality are easily discover'd: More remote Points, not so easily. As then they will grant that the general Consent in Principles of Morality is a strong Proof of their Certainty, however widely Men judge in remoter Points of Morals, so we may justly conclude that the Consent of Nations is a great Proof of reveal'd

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veal'd Religion in general, notwithstanding the great Difference in Particulars.

CRITOM. Others will even deny the Consent to be general, because many have doubted formerly; and in these later Times especially, wherein the Matter has been more particularly discuss'd, great Numbers deny all reveal'd Religion. It is even grown a common Outcry, that the Number of *Deists* increases.

EUDOX. This again has more of the *Atheist* than of the *Deist*. It is true, there is a common Outcry, that their Number increases. But even supposing their Number to be great in Comparison of what it was formerly, yet it is very small and inconsiderable in Comparison with the Numbers who in former, and in these Times, hold a GOD and Religion. If in our Nation the Number has more particularly been increasing, it is manifestly more from a Corruption of Morals, than from any closer Enquiry into Truth. They will not pretend that they are generally the more sober, or the most learned, or the most philosophical Part of the Nation. They will commonly own it was in Taverns, not in their Studies and Prayers, that they imbibed those Notions. And after all, it seems that the greatest Part of those who pass for *Deists*,

*Deists*, are rather inclined to wish they could bring themselves to it (which would ease them of a great deal of Trouble) than that they really are convinced of it. Now, Sir, their Numbers thus consider'd, cannot be any just Bar to the Argument from general Consent. *Deists* will own that the Number there may have been, or now is of *Atheists*, does not hinder the general Consent of Mankind from being a strong Argument for the Belief of a GOD. Neither *Atheists* nor *Deists* have ever brought any whole Nation, no not even any little Village into their Opinions. If they could give their Sentiments any Appearance of Truth to work upon Numbers, they would have the Passions of Men to second them. Yet after all, they are but a few scatter'd Men, even where they are supposed to be the most numerous. If a few denying a GOD or Religion are to be minded as any just Exception against a general Consent, nothing can be certain. For what is there that some have not denied? The *Stoicks* denied, in Words at least, that the most excessive Pain is any Evil, and that there is any Inequality in Sins. The *Scepticks* denied that any Thing is certain. *Parmenides* held that the same Thing can be, and yet not be at the same Time. *Anaxagoras*,

that Snow is black. *Zeno*, that Motion is impossible. Shall we therefore question, whether the contrary Notions stand upon a general Consent? *Aristotle* thinks such Men deserve no farther Confutation than to say, *It is strange if they say so in their Minds* \*.

CRITOM. Perhaps it will be no less strange to you, that *Deists* should sometimes talk as if the Numbers of those who reject it were in a Manner equal to those who believe there is a reveal'd Religion; and to hear how they argue from thence. Very lately one of them told me (perceiving, I believe, that I was upon a Retreat from their Company, and Principles) that if I was not convinced that Religion is a meer human Invention, a meer Engine of State, yet it was certainly a doubtful Case. For, all Things consider'd, said he, we find some are on one Side, others on the opposite Side of the Question. Hence he inferr'd, addressing himself to me; thus, Sir, the Case being doubtful, our Liberty is in Possession, and it is an *Axiom* in Law (for you must know he was a Lawyer) that Possession holds good in doubtful Cases;

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\* Mirum si ita dicant in oratione quæ est in Anima.  
*Aristotle.*

and he gave the Axiom in *Latin*, with a learned Air : *In dubiis melior est conditio possidentis.*

EUDOX. Your Lawyer's Argument here, as to proving that the Case is doubtful, is only from the Numbers of those who deny any reveal'd Religion. Methinks he might easily have reflected, that there is no Comparison between the Numbers of those who deny it, and those who hold it. Comparing the Numbers therefore (to say nothing of the Qualities) of those on either Side, there can be no Doubt, even in the Eye of any Law. As to his *Axiom* of Possession, he should remember, that Possession does not stand for Liberty, but for Religion, which has been in immemorial Possession of Mens Minds in all Ages and all Nations. If even the Case was doubtful, yet certainly Prudence ought to determine for the safer Side, in a Matter of so great Consequence. And for this he has Axioms of Law too. *Arnobius* has long since observed, that good Sense would make a Man embrace *Christianity*, where there is every Thing to be hoped for by receiving it, and every Thing to be fear'd and lost by rejecting it. He justly adds, that even supposing future Things to be uncertain, it is more conformable to good Sense, ra-



ther to believe that which gives Hopes of some good, than that which leaves us none at all. For we are not expos'd to any Peril, we have no Harm to fear, if what we hope does not come to pass. But it would be the greatest of Ills, the greatest of Losses, to find afterwards, that what was taught, proves not to be false, but true. He then says to Libertines; are you not afraid that the Things you ridicule should perhaps prove true and real? Do you not at least doubt a little that you will one Day know too late, what you now refuse to believe, and that a useless Repentance will be your eternal Punishment for not believing? We may add a strong Instance, that the greatest *Deists* are not without their Doubts, since they have term'd their Death, *taking a Leap in the Dark*.

CRITOM. I must own, that Saying of some noted *Deists* \* at their Death, always shock'd me. What can be more inconsistent with the Notion of a God, than to think he would leave us in the dark about our End, and about no less a Point than eternal Happiness and eternal Misery? I cannot think his Goodness would leave us in a dismal Uncertainty about a Matter of

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\* *Rabais, Hobbes, &c.*

such Consequence, without giving us sufficient Means to ascertain us of the Truth in what regards our future State, as to the Substance of it, tho' not as to all Particulars. I must farther own, that scarce any Thing has more determin'd me to discourse with you upon Religion, than the Horror I have, and every Man of Sense should have, of being reduced at his Death, to say he is *going to take a Leap in the Dark*, if by that Expression is meant an Uncertainty of Mind about the Substance of a future State.

EUDOX. I suppose you do not mean here, that Uncertainty of Mind as to our future State, which may arise from an humble Fear of not having complied with our Duty to GOD ; such an humble Fear is always accompanied with a comfortable Hope in his Mercy : But that you mean an Uncertainty arising from Mens pretending that GOD has not so clear'd the Belief of an Eternity of future Rewards or Punishments, as to make it certain, but has left it doubtful.

CRITOM. You have explain'd my Meaning exactly. Now that GOD should have left that a doubtful Case, not to be decided by our best Enquiries, appears to me inconsistent with the Notions of *Deity*. And yet, as far as I can observe, a great many

pretended *Deists* seem to aim at no more than meerly to bring themselves to a Sort of Persuasion, that the whole Business of a reveal'd Religion, and particularly that of a future State, is doubtful. Few of them even pretend that the Negative is absolutely certain. However, to allay their Fears (for Fears there must be in such Doubts) they sometimes argue against future Punishments, by saying, that as GOD gave Laws for the good of Man, so he cannot punish him but for his good. Hence they infer that, since what is past cannot be help'd, he cannot punish but to prevent a future Breach of the Law. They add, that all Punishment, for Punishment sake, is meer Cruelty and Malice; and that whatever Punishments GOD inflicts, must be Marks of his Love.

EUDOX. A Lawyer of my Acquaintance, often used that pretended Argument. Upon his using it in a Company where I happen'd to be, I told him it surpris'd me, that a Gentleman of the *Law*, whose Profession should keep him mindful of *Justice*, should seem to over-look the Justice of GOD, and attribute only Goodness to him; whereas it is evident, that his Justice must be equal to his Goodness, and that a wise Law-giver must guard his Laws by proper Sanctions, which may enforce the Observance; and that

that he may, very consistently with Goodness, punish those who violate his Laws. It is not against God's Goodness to threaten Punishments ; nor consequently to inflict them. For what may with Reason be threaten'd, may consistently with Reason be executed. It is moreover very manifest, that all Punishment need not be for the Good of the Offender. Death, for Example, cannot be said to be for the Good of the Offender. Will therefore those *Deists* pretend that *Capital* Punishments are unlawful ? This would be condemning all civil Governments. And when they say, that all Punishment, which is not for the Good of the Offender, is meer Cruelty and Malice, they condemn all Punishment that is inflicted for the Terror of others. And when they add, that what is pass'd cannot be help'd, and thence infer that no Punishment can be inflicted but for the Good of the Offender, they again condemn, not only all capital Punishment, but all Punishment whatsoever. For no Crime can be punish'd 'till after it is committed. If then it is Cruelty to punish what is past, because it cannot be help'd, it will follow by their way of arguing, that no Crime can be punish'd. For it cannot be punish'd before it was committed ; and after it is committed, it



cannot be help'd. Yet such are the Ways of arguing, which *Deists* take from him whom they seem to look upon as an Oracle. I mean the Author of a strange Book, with a strange Title, *Christianity as old as the Creation*.

CRITOM. Howsoever unreasonable it is to argue in such a way, which if it proved any Thing, would prove that neither Man nor GOD can inflict any Punishment on Offenders, yet those *Deists* argue with some Appearance of Strength, when they deny that GOD can punish *eternally* for a Sin committed in a Moment. They urge that there must, in all Justice, be a due Proportion between the Punishment and the Offence. Then they ask, what Proportion there can be between infinite Punishment, and a momentary, or temporal Offence? If you say, the Offence increases in Proportion to the Dignity of the Person offended, and thence infer, that since GOD is infinite, the Offence against him must also be infinite, they will answer, that in many Instances that way of Calculation will appear to be wrong. Let one suffice. Thus the Goodness of an Act increases in Proportion to the Goodness of the *Object*: Yet it does not follow, that every good Act, which has GOD for its *Object*, is infinite, because he is so. It only follows,

follows, that if all things else are equal, the Act will be better from the Excellency of the Object; but not absolutely, and if other things are unequal, the Grievousness of an Offence is not then to be measured only by the Greatness of the Person offended, but also by the Knowledge of the Offender. Thus if one should offend the King, whom he met in a Disguise, and knew very imperfectly, the Offence would not increase in Proportion to the royal Dignity. And thus the Offences of Children are less, because their Apprehension of things is imperfect. Since therefore, the Knowledge we have of God is very imperfect, the Greatness of our Sins cannot be infinite.

EUDOX. It is true there are several *Divines*, who from the infinite Dignity of God, conclude that the Malice of Sin against him is absolutely infinite: But the more common, and true Opinion is, that it is not *absolutely* infinite; and for that very Reason you have alleged. Nor does it follow from the infinite Duration of the Punishment, that Sin is also infinite. Even in Punishments here on Earth, we see the Duration of Sin is not the Measure of the Duration of the Punishment; that is often only momentary, tho' this lasts a great while. Nay, capital Punishment lasts in a manner eternally. For the Government that deprives  
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the Criminal of Life, can never restore it, or put an end to the Privation which it inflicts for a momentary Crime. \* Why then may not God justly threaten, and consequently inflict endless Punishment on Sinners; especially if we consider the Grievousness of Sin, and Mens Proclivity to it, and that even so great a Punishment so often fails of deterring them from it; and that moreover, when Sinners have let the time of Mercy be elapsed without Repentance, they become obdurate, and never repent. If still farther those Gentlemen would duly ponder a Reflection of *St. Bernard*, they would more easily apprehend the Justice of punishing Sinners with endless Torments. I shall not suppose, they will pay any great Deference to his Authority. Let them however allow due Weight to his Reason, where he says: That altho' Sin is short with regard, to the Time and Action, yet it is of a long Duration with regard to the Obstinacy of the Will. For the Sinner would never have ceased from Sin, if he had never died; or rather would have desired never to die, that he might always have the Power of sinning; so that we may say of him, that in

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\* Qui morte mulcetur, numquid moram quâ occiditur, quæ brevis est, ejus supplicium leges aestimant; an non potius quod in sempiternum eum auferant de Societate viventium. *S. Aug.*

a little Space, he fill'd up the Measure of endless Time. Since therefore he never desired to change his Design in any Time, he deserved to suffer the Punishment of his Sin through all Time.

CRITOM. Such Reflections may in some Measure facilitate the Belief of eternal Torments. Yet still you must own, there is in that *Eternity of Torments* inflicted by infinite Goodness, and for a momentary Sin, something that shocks Reason, and which our Reason cannot comprehend.

EUDOX. This, I own, is what I have often heard from several; and I easily imagine you have heard it oftner. That such an *Eternity* shocks Reason, I deny; it shocks the criminal *Heart*, but not the *Reason* of the Sinner. This you will readily judge to be the Truth of the Matter, if you reflect, that those who pretend that *Eternity of Torments* for Sins of short Duration is inconsistent with Reason, never object that *Eternity of Rewards* for good Actions, is against Reason. And yet, since God's Justice is equal to his Mercy, and equal Causes have equal Effects, there is nothing more shocking to Reason in eternal Punishments, than in eternal Rewards for short and temporary Actions. It is then the guilty Heart, not the Reason of the Sinner that



that is shock'd at the Eternity of Punishments. \* I grant however, that there is in it something which our Reason cannot fully comprehend. And what is there, not only in GOD, but even in Nature, which we fully comprehend? Where is there any thing a little removed from the very first Principles, wherein we do not soon meet with some Difficulties, which as (those Gentlemen would express it) shock Reason, and which we cannot fully answer in Particular? Must we therefore deny, or can we even justly doubt of Things which in the main are proved by Reason, because we cannot fully resolve all particular Difficulties that may be objected? By no means. Nothing would be more unreasonable. It is the same in what we find attested by unquestionable Authority, tho' what is so attested should be never so much above the Comprehension of our Reason. The only reasonable way then of proceeding in this Point of eternal Torments (and in all profound *Mysteries*) is to consider, whether it stands upon a *divine Authority*. If it does, we are to believe it, whatever Difficulties it may seem to include; because it is more evident that

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\* Deum malles sub quo delicta aliquando gauderent, & illum bonum judicares qui hominem malum faceret securitate delicti. *Tertul. adv. Marci.*

GOD cannot reveal a Falsity, than that those Difficulties are unanswerable in themselves, tho' we (who ought to be very conscious, and diffident of our Weakness) cannot fully resolve them in particular. But this I only just mention now, because we shall have occasion of considering it farther, with Regard to first and sublime *Mysteries* of Christianity.

CRITOM. Whatever occasion we may have to consider it, with Regard to particular *Mysteries*, give me leave to propose what *Deists* object against the Belief of *Mysteries* in general. For I have always observed, that they seem to think the chief Strength of their Cause is in their Arguments against *Mysteries*. Thus, for Example, they argue, and as they seem to think, by very subtle and close Consequences. We are reasonable Creatures. Consequently to be govern'd by Reason. *Mysteries* are above Reason, consequently Reason cannot guide me to them. For how can Reason lead me to Things that are out of her Reach? And how can that be reasonable to me, which by my Reason I cannot comprehend?

EUDOX. It often happens, that Men gain the Reputation of being close Reasoners, by an affected Solemnity of Propositions, that seem to have a close Connection, tho'

tho' in reality they have none at all. This is exactly the Case in what you mention. A short Examination of those Propositions will presently shew what Weakness there is under that pretended consequential Train. We are reasonable Creatures. Yes certainly. But our Reason is certainly of a *limited* Perfection. When therefore it is inferr'd, that we must be guided by Reason in what we believe, the true Meaning cannot be, that we cannot reasonably believe any Thing but what we comprehend : It can only be, that we must be so far govern'd by Reason, as not to believe any Thing contrary to Reason. Yet since our Reason is limited, many Things which are not within our comprehending, may be true, and within the Comprehension of the superior Reason of God. And when we find, upon just Grounds, that they are deliver'd to us by his sacred Authority, they become the Objects of our most reasonable Belief. When therefore it is again added, that Mysteries being above our Reason, our Reason cannot lead us to them, this is only true, inasmuch as our Reason cannot by itself, attain a full Knowledge of them. But still it is manifest, we may reasonably believe them upon a divine Authority. We often believe, upon meer human Authority,

Things

Things which by our own Reason we do not comprehend. Nor is any thing in the World more easy than to understand, that there is often a reasonable Submission to Authority in believing what we do not comprehend. Even in natural Things, we know we can move. But whoever knows any thing of Philosophy, knows, that to answer fully all the Difficulties of explaining the Possibility of Motion, is above the Reach of his Reason. And shall we think it reasonable not to believe what God reveals, because we cannot fully resolve all the Objections that may be raised? Reason turns to Folly if she pretends to go beyond her Bounds; and she goes strangely beyond them, if she will believe nothing but what she comprehends. \*

CRITOM. However, they will be for urging the Point farther, or at least in a different turn, and say; that since Reason was given us chiefly to judge of Religion, we cannot be obliged to believe any thing as a Point of Religion, which Reason cannot judge of. This they may confirm by a Comparison from our Senses. Sight is given us to discern visible Objects. It would be

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\* Omnis ars suis terminis non contenta, stultitia efficit.  
*S. Chrys.* Hom. 4. in 1. ad Cor.



ridiculous to think it can shew us Things invisable. All our Powers have their proper *Objects* and *Sphere*, beyond which they cannot go. Hence they will infer, it would be equally ridiculous to pretend that Reason can shew us Things out of her Reach : And that Reason, on the other Hand, would not answer the End for which it was chiefly given, if it could not judge of all Things in Religion.

EUDOX. It is strange that such Things as these should pass for Arguments, and even for close ones. But since there are Men weak enough to think them such, let us comply, so far at least, as to point out the Answer. And this indeed has been already done upon their former Propositions, yet since they who are weak enough to urge such Things, are apt to cry they are not answer'd, unless the Answer is suited to the very turn of their Words, let us comply with them, even in this. It is granted then, that Reason was given us chiefly to judge of Religion. But as our Reason is limited, and Religion includes the Belief of a GOD, and GOD is illimited, our Reason cannot be the Judge of all that Religion includes ; for it cannot be the Judge of infinite Perfections. And tho' Reason cannot oblige us to believe any thing as a Point of Religion

Religion which we cannot judge of so far as to determine us, whether we have sufficient Motives to believe it, yet as Authority is properly the Motive of believing, \* Reason may oblige us to believe such Things as we cannot fully comprehend, when by Reason we see they are attested by divine Authority. And again, as Sight cannot see invisible Objects, so Reason cannot see unreasonable Things. Yet as Things out of the actual Sphere of the Eye, may (if visible of their own Nature) be brought within its View, so what is true in itself, tho' not actually in the Reach of our Reason, may be brought within it, as far as GOD may please to enlighten us. What was added, that Reason would not answer the End for which it was given, if it could not fully judge of all Things in Religion, is so manifestly false, that it need scarce be answer'd. For Reason was not given us to judge *fully* of *all* Things in Religion; this being plainly impossible; because, as I already observed, a limited Power cannot possibly judge *fully* of illimited Perfections. And those Gentlemen would readily see how wrong that way of arguing is, if they would

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\* Sicut quod intelligimus, rationi debemus, sic quod credimus, autoritati. *S. Aug. de Util. cred. c. 11.*

put the Word *Truth*, instead of Religion ; Thus for Example, Reason was given us to discover Truth. Will they hence conclude, it would not answer the End for which it was given, if it could not judge *fully* of all Truth. Certainly such Ways of arguing deserve no farther Notice.

CRITOM. Perhaps you will allow there is more Appearance of Weight in their arguing with the Author of *Christianity as old as the Creation*, from the Perfection of the Law of Nature, against all reveal'd Law or Religion. They ask, with him : If GOD from the Beginning gave Man a Religion, was that Religion perfect, or was it imperfect ? If you say it was perfect, they immediately infer, that no other Religion could be added to improve it ; because what is perfect cannot be improved. For what is capable of Improvement wants perfecting, and consequently is not already perfect. If you say, the Religion of Nature was imperfect, they presently tell you, that no Religion can come from a perfectly wise Being, but what is absolutely perfect.

EUDOX. Far from allowing even the Appearance of any great Weight in such Arguments, I only wonder how they could ever be seriously urged. They might just as well be urged to prove that Man cannot  
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be capable of any Improvement. For just in the same manner it may be ask'd: Did GOD create Man perfect or imperfect. Not imperfect, since nothing imperfect can come from a Being of infinite Wisdom and Perfection. If perfect, then he can receive no Improvement; since improving is perfecting, and what is perfect, cannot be perfected. The direct Answer, if such Things can deserve one, is: That a Religion given by a perfectly wise Being, must be perfect *in its kind*; that is, suited to the End for which it was given: but not *absolutely perfect*. Just as all Creatures are perfect in their Kind, but not absolutely perfect, or incapable of any farther Perfection. And here again it would become those Gentlemen (if they are not incapable of Improvement) to observe how wrong it is to argue against Revelation in such Ways as are confuted by plain *Fact*. Nothing is plainer in Fact, than the Inequality of Perfection in Creatures. Since then *Deists* own a GOD, they cannot with any Coherence argue, that because GOD is absolutely perfect, nothing can come from him but what is absolutely perfect. Such Ways of arguing sound more of the *Atheist*, than *Deist*.

CRITOM. Another Argument they use from the same Author, to this Effect: The  
Law



Law of Nature is the Rule by which we must judge of the Perfection of all other Laws; for where we find any other Law not agreeing with that of Nature, we need no farther Proof: It must be rejected because not agreeable to that *Rule*, or *Test*. And then they ask very gravely: Must not that be the most perfect Law by which the Perfection of all others must be tried?

EUDOX. This pretended Argument cannot, infine, be resolved into any thing more, than that no *after-revelation* can be from GOD, if it contradicts the certain Principles of natural Religion. In this Sense you may, if you please, call natural Religion the *Test* of all Religions. In the same Sense, the first Principles of reasoning are the *Test* of all Religions and all Sciences. And you might as well say, there can be no farther Knowledge than of the first Principles, as that we can have no farther Religion than that of Nature. All Improvements in Sciences must be tried by Agreement with first Principles, and be consistent with them. All true Religion, must likewise be consistent with the Religion of Nature. But to infer from hence, that there can be no farther Truths of Religion imparted to us from GOD, than those which are discover'd to us by the meer  
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Light of Nature, is no less absurd, than to say, he cannot make known to us any Truths of natural Sciences by any farther improving of our Capacities, or by any clearer Lights, than what we have in the common Course of Nature. When therefore they gravely ask, must not that be the most perfect Law, by which all others are to be tried, we may desire them to ask with the same Gravity (if they can hold their Countenance so long) whether that must not be the most perfect System of Science by which all others must be tried? Then let them infer, if they think fit, that nothing can be more perfect, and nothing can be farther known than the first Principles of natural Science. But if they grant there may be a farther Progress in Science than that of first Principles, tho' the Improvements must be tried by Consistency with first Principles, they must also grant, there may be a farther Knowledge of Religious Truths communicated to us, tho' those farther Points of reveal'd Religion must be consistent with the Religion of Nature.

CRITOM. I clearly see how weak are the Arguments I have hitherto proposed. Some of them are such as I always thought to have little Force, yet I was willing to propose

48 *Deism and Christianity, &c.* Dial. I.

propose them, that I might be more ready from your replies, to answer them upon Occasions. Others have appear'd to me to have some Weight; and tho' they never fully determin'd me to *Deism*, yet they help'd to keep me wavering. I have others still of both Kinds to propose. But I will not trespass any farther on your Patience at this Time, having, I fear, done it too much already, in your present Condition.

EUDOX. Not at all. Be ever easy in that respect. Our Friendship will allow me the Liberty of declaring whether Business, or Pain makes me unfit for such Discourses. It is the former, not the latter, that hinders me at present. But I shall be glad to pursue the Matter with you Tomorrow.



DEISM



DEISM  
AND  
CHRISTIANITY

FAIRLY CONSIDER'D, &c.

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DIALOGUE II.

BETWEEN

CRITOMACHUS and EUDOXUS.

CRITOMACHUS.



FROM thus preventing the usual Hour of my waiting upon you, it will be easy to guess that I am eager to pursue the Inquiry I am determined to make into Religion.

EUDOX. It is what much increases the Pleasure I have long had in your Company.

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CRITOM.



CRITOM. Upon recollecting the Arguments I have observed to be the most used by *Deists*, I find they are chiefly from the Author of *Christianity as old as the Creation*. The first that occurs to me now, is the Argument they use from him, and which they seem to value very much: That as GOD is unchangeable, our Duty to him must be so too: That consequently no Duties can be injoin'd by any new Revelation, which did not perpetually oblige, without supposing a Change in the Mind of GOD.

EUDOX. Strange kind of Arguing! Do not they see how much more it has of *Atheism* than of *Deism*? Do they not see that if GOD could create the World in Time, without any Change in his Mind, he may no less reveal his Will farther in Time, than he was pleas'd to do at first, without any Change in himself? As GOD from Eternity will'd to create the World in Time, so he decreed from Eternity to reveal new Points of Religion at the Time which his Wisdom had eternally prefixt. In both Cases it is equally unreasonable to suppose any Change in his Will. Our Duty to him is unchangeable in this Sense, that we are ever oblig'd to obey his Will as far as it is made known to us. But not that he cannot

not make his Will farther known to us at one time, than at another. This must be granted by *Deists* themselves. For they cannot deny but that even the Law of Nature is made farther known to us, as we are farther capable of drawing Consequences from the Principles of natural Religion. Nor is there any Difference, as to the Obligation we are under to new Duties, whether it is by new Revelations, or by new Improvements in Reasoning, that such Duties are made known.

CRITOM. They urge farther, that new Duties impos'd upon us by reveal'd Religion would put us in a worse Condition, than if we were only subject to the Law of Nature; and that they would hazard our Salvation by an Addition of unnecessary Precepts.

EUDOX. I must needs say, it is hard we should be forced to reply to such trifling Objections. It is very wonderful if they do not see, that by this way of arguing, we must be in a worse Condition by improving in the Knowledge of the Law of Nature. For the more we advance in that, the more our Duties increase, from which those will be free who have less Insight into the Religion of Nature. By this kind of Reasoning, the most dull and illiterate will be in a

better Condition, than the most Learned. Will the Adversaries of Revelation pursue the Consequence of their Argument, and wish themselves *Brutes* that they may have no Obligations, no Hazards of their Salvation?

CRITOM. At other times they would reject all Revelations as unnecessary. For if they are necessary, say they, how could infinite Goodness have delay'd them? Can infinite Goodness refuse what is necessary? And if unnecessary, how can infinite Wisdom ordain what is needless?

EUDOX. Those Gentlemen are here again to be put in mind, that such Ways of arguing must be rather resolved into *Atheism*, than into *Deism*, For the Creation of the World is either necessary, or unnecessary. If necessary, how could it be delay'd by infinite Goodness? If unnecessary, how could infinite Wisdom ever do what is unnecessary or needless? The same Questions may equally be ask'd upon any new Knowledge of natural Religion. If the new Discoveries we make in it are necessary, how could infinite Goodness delay giving us the Knowledge of them? If unnecessary, how could infinite Wisdom ordain, or oblige us to what is needless? Sure it is needless to use more Words in shewing the Weakness of such Objections.

CRITOM.

CRITOM. Excuse me however, if I just take notice of what they add to that Objection, and what I find they sometimes urge as very strong. If Reason, say they, is to be heard, no unnecessary Things will be admitted: If any such are to be admitted, where shall we stop?

EUDOX. Is it possible they should not see that what is not absolutely necessary, may yet become necessary when made known either by Improvement of natural Knowledge, or by Revelation? It is very evident, that many Things may become *obligatory* when known to be the Will of GOD, which were not so before; as indeed no Law obliges till it is sufficiently promulged, and then begins to oblige. It is no less plain, that a supreme Authority may add *new Injunctions*, either for a farther Trial of our Obedience, or as Helps to greater Degrees of Virtue here, and Happiness hereafter. And when they ask, Where shall we stop? The Answer is very obvious: Where GOD shall please to fix our Points? As they must answer when ask'd, Where shall we stop in the Obligations of the Law of Nature? Just where GOD shall please to fix the Bounds of them, according to the different Shares of *Capacities* and *Opportunities* he is pleased to give



Men for the Knowledge and Practice of them.

CRITOM. Perhaps I must also enter an Excuse for minding the following Argument drawn from the same Author. That eternal Disputes may, and do arise about reveal'd Religions: That they have caused the greatest Quarrels, and Cruelties, and Calamities that have ever happen'd to the World: That therefore all such Revelations should be cast intirely out of the World, since they cause such Disturbance: And infine, that GOD cannot be the Author of such Revelations as are the Cause of so many, and so fatal Evils.

EUDOX. Here again they should observe, that such Arguments, if they were of any Force, would lead, not only to *Deism*, but to down-right *Atbeism*. I take notice of this so often, because it is of Moment to make such as are apt to think *Deists* are Men of great Closeness in arguing, <sup>see they</sup> are strangely mistaken; for on one hand, *Deists* generally pretend to be fully convinced of the Folly of *Atbeism*. On the other hand, while they are so often found to use such Ways of arguing against reveal'd Religion, as would no less prove against the Existence of a GOD, it must plainly appear they have no such Claim to  
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the Character of close Reasoners. There is no greater Proof of the contrary, than to be frequently using such Arguments as plainly recoil upon themselves, and are evidently inconsistent with their own Principles. Now to remark upon each Part of the Objection: It is said, that eternal Disputes arise about reveal'd Religion. And just so the *Atheist* will say, those eternal Disputes arise from the Belief of a *DEITY*. It is added, that the Notions of reveal'd Religion have caused the greatest Calamities, and are therefore to be thrown intirely out of the World. Just so again the *Atheist*; that the Belief of a *GOD* drew on Notions of his Worship, and various Notions of Worship brought on all those Calamities; and consequently, that Belief from whence those Miseries spring, should be cast out. We may add, that upon what is call'd the *the Religion of Nature*, eternal Disputes may, and do arise: For however undisputable some Principles of it may be, yet remoter Inferences are not so. And consequently, by these Gentlemens way of arguing, all such must be cast out. Such Inferences would leave Men much at large, but would add to their Calamities, even in this World. When infine they conclude, that *GOD* cannot be the Author of reveal'd

Religions from which flow so many Disputes and Miseries, what is this but the *Atbeistical* Argument, that the Constitution of the World, from which so many Miseries flow, cannot be from a GOD? And why do not *Deists* conclude, that the Law of Nature cannot be grounded in Reason, since from it so many Disputes and Calamities arise? And because Property often causes Disputes, will they be for having that, and Laws, and Kings, all cast out? The Truth of the Matter is; such Disputes, and Miseries are not owing to the Belief of a DEITY, or of a reveal'd Religion, or the Law of Nature, but to the ungovern'd Passions, and Wickedness of Men. The best things may thus be perverted. But Men that will pretend nothing must be admitted that thus may be perverted, are not to be farther argued with.

CRITOM. But what would you reply to them when they say: It can only come under the head of *Probability*, that GOD has reveal'd himself any other way than by the Light of Nature: That all Religions pretend equally to a true Revelation: That the prodigious Number of Religions in the World, shews how easily Men may be imposed upon in that Kind.

EUDOX.

EUPOX. First I would ask them, if they think it conclusive that there can be no true Revelation, because there are pretended ones? If so, it will also follow, that because Men have been easily carried into a Belief of false Gods, it must be concluded there is no true one. Will they conclude there are no truly moral Men, because there are many Hypocrites? Or, that because all Religions do equally pretend to Revelation, they all do it upon equally good Grounds? Or, that nothing can be rationally believed upon probable Grounds, and when there is not strict Evidence of Demonstration? How few things, even of the Law of Nature, are made out in such a demonstrative way? And if they must be obliged to nothing but what they see in a Train of Demonstrations, we shall soon have a wild World. Nor is any Demonstration more certain, than that Reason requires we should act in many Cases where there is no immediate Demonstration. If *Deists* will pretend to reject all Obligations that are not proved to them in strict Demonstration, let them try the Point in any Court. Let them call for Demonstrations, and refuse to be tied to *Probabilities*. They will soon find how ridiculous they will appear, and will be punish'd for their Folly?



CRITOM. But if GOD (thus they argue again with the same Author) acts upon rational Motives, and for the Good of Mankind, must not the same Motives which obliged him to discover any thing for the Good of Men, oblige him to discover every thing that is so? And after the same plain Manner, and not to do it as it were grudgingly, little by little.

EUDOX. This Argument, if it must have that Name, must be, infine, resolved thus: That what GOD does rationally and for the Good of Men, he must do at all times equally, and equally to all. Is it possible they should not perceive the *Atheistical* Tendency of their pretended Argument? It would equally prove there is no GOD; because if there is, he must be equally good to all, and at all Times; which it is plain in *Fact* is not done. For we see they *gradually* improve in Reason, by little and little, and that there is a vast Inequality among them in many different respects. It is no less evident, that their way of arguing here has no more Weight against reveal'd, than against natural Religion. For this is imparted in a greater Share, to some than to others, and more at one time than at another. Shall Men, who argue in ways that so evidently recoil upon themselves,

themselves, be thought *close reasoners*? When they ask how it is consistent with the infinite Benevolence of the DEITY to delay a Revelation, and not communicate it to all at once and equally, do they not see the same Question may as well be ask'd, about communicating the Law of Nature; and that *Atheists* may equally ask, how it is consistent with infinite Benevolence to delay any Happiness to his Creatures, or to make some of them more happy than others? To both the *Atheist*, and the *Deist*, it is sufficient to answer, that infinite Benevolence must also be infinitely *free*. Consequently, it must be infinitely free in imparting Favours. Nor indeed can we have any Notion of Favours, properly so call'd, that are not free. And if free, they may be given in what Measure and Time the infinitely wise and good, and free Giver shall please.

CRITOM. Perhaps they will think there is more Force in the like Argument, proposed in the Words of the same Author, towards the Beginning of his Book. I nearly remember the very Words. Can it be supposed that an infinitely good and gracious Being, which gives Men Notice by their Senses of what does good to their Bodies, has had less regard to their immortal Souls, and

and has not given them at all times, by the Light of their Understanding, sufficient Means to discover what makes for the Good of their Souls, but has necessitated them, or any Number of them, to continue from Age to Age, in destructive Ignorance or Error.

EUDOX. If by such Arguments no more was meant, than that infinite Goodness infers the giving to Men such Means of avoiding eternal Misery as are sufficient to that End, unless Men neglect such Means by their own Fault, let those answer them who deny such sufficient Means. True Christianity, I am sure, does not teach that any are damn'd but for their own Faults. It teaches, that none are so miserable but in Punishment of a *criminal Neglect* of the Means GOD gave them to attain their Salvation. But, in what Measure or Proportion his Goodness shall at any time, bestow more particular Favours or Graces beyond what is sufficient, is not for us to judge. This we know, that as Goodness does not oblige him to be equally favourable to all, so it does not oblige him to bestow equal Means and Opportunities to all, and at all times. If by this way of arguing they would infer, that all, and at all times, must have equal Means, and by the Light of Understanding alone, to attain the highest Degrees  
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of Happiness they can possibly be capable of, what can be more Weak? Is it not certain that our meer natural Knowledge is very imperfect? As our whole Nature, so our Understanding is limited. Nothing is more plain, than that we all do not, nay cannot, by the meer Light of Understanding, discover every thing that might advance our Perfection. It is manifest that Men differ vastly in their natural Capacities, and in many Opportunities of Improvement. It is therefore plain in *Fact*, that all are not equally favour'd by the divine Goodness, even as to the Light of Understanding. Since then these Men own a GOD, they must own that his Goodness does not require he should give equal Understanding, and all equal means of Happiness to all. For, owning a GOD, they must own, that the Constitution of Things which does in Fact exist, is consistent with his infinite Goodness. Nor can any thing be more incoherent, than first to own a GOD, and then to argue from his Attributes in such a way, as must evidently infer such Consequences as are contrary to the plainest Facts.

CRITOM. Begging your Pardon, *Eudoxus*, you slip over with great Caution, as they would say, the Instances of our Senses;



Senses; in which, I have observed, they seem to think there is great Force.

EUDOX. I can assure you, *Critomachus*, I did not slip it over with any cautious Fear, but because I really thought it not worth any Notice. Alas! could one imagine those Gentlemen, who would be thought to see so far and so acutely, should not reflect, that what they there hint with Reference to the present Argument, is also contrary to plain Fact? It is true our Senses are in many Cases of great Service to give us Notice of what does good or hurt to our Bodies. But it is no less certain they do not so in all things; often they do not even distinguish between Poison, and a Remedy. To pretend therefore from GOD's Care of our Bodies, that our Senses give us Notice of whatever may do good or hurt to them, and to infer from thence, that his Goodness must give us the fullest Notice by the Light of our Understanding, of whatsoever is good or hurtful to our immortal Part, is first to assume a manifestly wrong Instance, and then to draw a no less manifest wrong Inference.

CRITOM. Nothing can be more plain. But may not some regard be had to those *Deists* who give their Arguments a pious sort of a Turn? As when they argue against  
all

all reveal'd Religion, not perhaps by using the Scripture Expression of *adoring* GOD *in Spirit and Truth*, but by copiously extolling the *inward* Worship of GOD; that the Heart is all he regards; that *external* Ceremonies are not essential; that far from it, they are apt to draw off the Mind from what is all in all, in a true Worship of GOD, that is, from inward Worship. Hence they proceed to observe, that since all reveal'd Religions abound with many external Ceremonies, and Observances, they are meer human Inventions, and needless at least, if not prejudicial to true Worship, which must consist in the Heart alone.

EUDOX. One can hardly imagine those Gentlemen think to persuade the World they are the most pious of Men, by declaring against all external Marks and Helps of Piety. Since we are compounded of Bodies as well as of Minds, nothing can be more natural than to infer, that both Parts should share in our Worship to GOD. Nor have we a more universal Consent of all Nations in the Belief of a GOD, than in believing the Reasonableness of some *external Worship*. No Man of any serious Thoughts on the Matter, thinks that meer outward Marks or Ceremonies are the Essentials of Religion.

Religion. But every one easily apprehends they may be proper Signs and Means to nourish it in ourselves, and to communicate it to others. A Father knows, that what is the most essential Duty of Children, is their inward Love and Respect. But what would one of those pious *Deists* say, if his Children, instructed in his way of arguing, should excuse themselves from all outward Marks, by telling him, *the Heart is all in all*? Would he not easily see the Weakness of his Argument against all external Worship?

CRITOM. Perhaps he would reply, that GOD sees the Heart, which the Father cannot, and that therefore there is a great Difference in the Case.

EUDOX. The Case is certainly very different in many respects. But the Argument is in Substance the same in both Cases. GOD cannot indeed require external Marks as requisite for his own Information in judging of our inward Disposition; but he may require them as outward Testimonies of it to others, and in Obedience to what he may please to command with regard to our outward Behaviour.

CRITOM. But would you imagine, that besides that pious way of arguing, from the Commendations of inward Worship, they also argue from Sentiments of Humility? They

They first observe, that infinite is the Grandeur of GOD. Then, that their own Meanness and Baseness is in a manner infinite. Then they infer, that between such distant Extremities, there can be no Proportion; and that therefore it is a Folly to imagine he can require, or be pleased with the Love of such Worms, or mind what we do, or do not.

EUDOX. Men who have been so vain as to oppose their Opinions to the universal Judgment of the World, must bring very demonstrative Proofs before they can hope to convince us of their Humility. They need not however be vain of the Argument as of their own Invention; it has been used by many an ancient Infidel. It is a very just Remark of the great Archbishop of *Cambray*, which I have here in my Notes from his Works, \* that “ This  
 “ sort of abasing themselves, is at the  
 “ Bottom seeking an Independence of  
 “ GOD, and meer hypocritical Humility.  
 “ Exaggerating their own Baseness, and  
 “ the Disproportion between GOD and  
 “ themselves, they seek to strike off the  
 “ Yoke of GOD, and make a sort of  
 “ Divinity of themselves, in satisfying all

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\* Lettres sur divers sujets.

“ their



“ their irregular Passions, and making  
 “ themselves the Centre of all things  
 “ round them. They are charm’d to place  
 “ GOD in such a Superiority as to imagine  
 “ he does not vouchsafe to mind them, or  
 “ to reward or punish either their Virtues  
 “ or their Vices.” And after some other  
 Reflections to this Point, he concludes :  
 “ Compare these two Plans, whereof one  
 “ presents to us a GOD, wise, good,  
 “ vigilant, who orders, corrects, re-  
 “ wards, who will be known, loved,  
 “ obey’d ; the other that represents to us  
 “ a GOD unconcern’d at our Conduct, un-  
 “ moved at Virtue or Vice, at our follow-  
 “ ing or abandoning Reason, who neglects  
 “ us as soon as he has made us, and  
 “ having bestow’d upon us Faculties capa-  
 “ ble of bringing us to the Knowledge  
 “ and Love of him, minds not whether  
 “ we know or love him. Compare these  
 “ two *Plans*, and I defy you not to prefer  
 “ the first to the second.” \*

CRITOM. It is certainly impossible not  
 to prefer the first. And truly to own a  
 GOD, and yet deny he requires our Ho-  
 mage, or minds what we do, is no less, nay  
 is more absurd in some respects, than

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\* Lettes sur divers sujets concernant la Religion, 1718.  
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down-right *Atheism*. Such a Notion would leave the World, if it could ever prevail, no better than a meer *Chaos* of Disorder and Vice. And little better would it be in the Notion of those *Deists*, who deny the *Immortality of the Soul*. I must own, I have met few of them who have absolutely denied it. Yet many have I met, who frequently seem'd willing to think it a dubious Point. For my own Part, I could never bring myself to any Doubt of it; and I believe the Expression I used of some being *willing to think* it uncertain, was very just. For it is more from the Will, than from the Understanding, that any such Doubts arise. It appears to me impossible that any Person who reflects, should not easily perceive an intimate Conviction, that the Power we are conscious of within us, by which we *think, deliberate, love, hate, &c.* is of a very different Nature from our Bodies. Being once convinced of this Difference, we may indeed well be astonish'd at the close *Union* between them, but we can never infer, with any appearance of Reason, that because the Body is dissolved by Death, therefore the Soul, which is of a Nature so very different, must also be dissolved. On the contrary, we clearly judge the Soul has no Parts into which it can be dissolved.

EUDOX.

EUDOX. Your Notion is very just. And that *Consciousness* appears to me more convincing than most other *Metaphysical* Proofs of the Distinction between Body and Soul. Far from condemning other *Metaphysical* Proofs that are used, I believe many of them are really convincing. But that *Consciousness* seems to me to be both more fully so, and more universally.

CRITOM. The same has long been my Persuasion. But I remember a *Deist* once told me: What you call *Consciousness*, and *intimate Conviction*, is only personal to yourself, and can be no Proof to another; what you say is intimate to you, is consequently unseen to me; and if I tell you I have a different intimate Conviction, as you cannot see through me, so you can never disprove me. Thence he inferred, that appealing to intimate Conviction, is like the *Quakers* appealing to the *Private Spirit*.

EUDOX. I suppose you found no great difficulty in shewing the Disparity.

CRITOM. No, truly. For tho' it is certain that the intimate Conviction of each particular Person is not visible to others immediately, yet we can easily make it appear, that the like Conviction is generally in others, even in those who pretend to deny

deny it. Let the Person pretending to deny it, ask an hundred others, whom he takes to be People of common Sense, a few Questions concerning their Thoughts and their Souls, and he will soon perceive they are all convinced of a very real and vast Difference between *Matter* and *Thought*, Soul and Body. Let him inquire, for Example, whether the Thought they have is Black or White, round or square? Whether it can be cut into ten or twenty Pieces? What will happen? However gravely he may look in proposing such Questions, they will smile, and never think they are ask'd seriously. Ask them again, whether the round or the flat Parts of their Bodies have most Wit or Sagacity; what Figure of little or great Parts of Matter is best for *Metaphysical*, what for *Logical* Speculations; how many Atoms must join to make a Negative; how many to frame a positive Thought. They will still think you are proposing to them, not serious, but bantering Questions. Tell them to imagine the Atoms as small as possibly they can, of the greatest Varieties of Figures, moved with vast Swiftneſs, and then inquire whether they do clearly ſee that Atoms thoughtleſs before, will ſuddenly begin to think, to love, to hate, to deliberate, and



70 *Deism and Christianity* Dial. II.  
and be every way most reasonable Creatures. They will wonder at you, if you continue to pretend it, but they will never believe you are serious. Such Questions appearing ridiculous to every one, is a plain Proof, that all have a full Conviction of a real and great Distinction between Bodies and thinking Substances. Run the Point up to what Speculations you please, you will never be able to get clear of this Conviction which is so clearly and fully settled in every Mind, however you may in some respects puzzle yourself and others. \*

EUDOX. And indeed, as I never thought the Distinction between Body and Soul needed any other Proof in the philosophical way, so it is very clear, that a real Distinction being proved, there can be no reason to suspect that a Separation of them can infer the Destruction of either. Let two Bodies be as closely united as possible, you will never imagine that the Separation of them destroys either. And if it is plain, that the Separation of two Bodies does not infer the *Annihilation* of either, it is no less evident, that the Separation of Body and Soul, which are so intirely different in

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\* This Paragraph is nearly in the Words of the Archbishop of *Cambray*.

Nature, cannot in the least be any ground to suspect the Annihilation of either. I never heard of any Philosopher that suspected any Part of our Bodies is annihilated by Death. The Parts are by Degrees separated, but not the least Atom destroy'd. Nor can one imagine why the Soul, which is so far superior in Perfection, should perish by being separated from the Body. I cannot persuade myself any one does really suspect it.

CRITOM. Some will however tell you, that as you believe there is a particular Soul created to inform each particular human Body, so when that Body is no longer fit for Animation, the Soul ceases to be, because the Body ceases to be a fit Receptacle for it; and it was only created to actuate the Body, while the Body itself should be fit to be so inform'd. In a Word: That the Soul being created with a View to that Union, as that Union is only temporary, so the Existence of the Soul must also be temporary.

EUDOX. It is surprising that Men can oppose the most certain and important Points by groundless Imaginations. We believe our Souls were created to animate our Bodies, but not that they were created for no other End. And to talk of the  
Soul's

Soul's Existence being confined to the time of Union with the Body, is talking in the Air without any manner of Ground. The Body is less perfect than the Soul. For it is more perfect to be a thinking, than a thoughtless Being. Yet we see the Existence of the Parts of a Body is not limited to the time of their Union with the Soul, or of their Union with each other. For when the Union of the Parts of our Bodies ceases, still the Parts themselves continue to exist. How groundless must it therefore be to suspect that the Soul, which is much the perfecter, is limited in her Existence to the time of her Union with the Body. In a Word: There is no Reason to suspect the Annihilation of either, any farther than GOD shall fix the Limits of their Existence. The Question is not whether GOD can destroy the Soul? This can be no Question. As the Creation, so the Conservation of all finite Beings must depend on his Will. The only reasonable Question here can be, Whether there are any grounds to apprehend the Annihilation of the Soul. We affirm there are none. Only GOD can do it. He does not annihilate any thing else in the World. Nothing of Reason, nothing but Fear of the Consequences of Crimes in a future State, can raise any Suspicion that he who  
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does not destroy the meanest Atoms, will destroy so perfect Beings as our Souls. Add here the moral Reasons to believe a future State of the Soul, and her Immortality will be farther demonstrated.

CRITOM. I cannot but think that the pretended Doubts of a future State are from nothing else at the Bottom, but from Mens seeking a *Lenitive* to the uneasy Fears of Punishments hereafter, that so they may indulge their Passions with less Disturbance. Be this as it will, and whether Doubts of it are from a vicious Heart, or not, they are certainly from a wrong Use of Reason, and are even contrary to the *Deists* Principles of following Reason, exclusively of Revelation. For thus they should argue, even upon the foot of Reason. We believe a GOD: We believe he gave us Reason for our Law, and Rule of Life: We must therefore conclude, he is pleased with those who live up to this Rule, and displeased with those who deviate from it. For it is his Law and Rule. If he is not pleased with our keeping, or displeased with our breaking his Law, where is his Equity? If he loves those who observe it, where does he shew that Love? Not always in this Life. For the best of People are often

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the most afflicted. It must therefore be in another Life. It is the same as to punishing the Transgressors of his Law. For God must be equally perfect in all his Attributes. Perfect Justice must punish Criminals. This is not done always here. It will therefore be done hereafter. Let Men turn their Reason which way they please, after all their most subtle Turns, they will never be able to get over this Argument. They must own a future State of Rewards or Punishments.

EUDOX. The greatest Men in all Ages have been very unanimous in using that Argument as a most unanswerable Demonstration. You will give me leave to mention how St. *Austin* urges it both to prove a future State, and to allay the uneasy Thoughts which may arise even in the best of People concerning *Providence*. He speaks to this Effect: When you are disturbed, says he, upon the View of Prosperity which so often attends the Wicked in this World, and the Adversity of the Good, you consider things only by halves. You consider only your own short Time, as if all the Designs of God were to be accomplish'd in that short Space, and the Good were to be compleatly rewarded, and the Wicked fully  
punish'd

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punish'd in it. \* GOD will do all in his time, tho' he does not all in your time. GOD's time is Eternity, your time is this Life. He is not obliged to do all in your time. It is sufficient that he will in his time. † Witness as you are of the seeming Injustice wherewith GOD permits the Bad to prosper, and the Good to suffer, you ought to draw this Consequence; that he will give both their due in another Life, since he does not in this.

CRITOM. There is no denying the Force of that Argument as to a future Life. But as to the Duration of a future Life, might not a *Deist* say, that divine Justice requires indeed another Life, wherein the Good shall be rewarded and the Bad punish'd, yet why may not Justice be satisfied in less Space than Eternity?

EUDOX. How far it can be demonstrated, that future Rewards or Punishments will be eternal, independently of Revelation, need not be here determined in our Disputes with *Deists*. It is sufficient to prove a *Future* of them; this will oblige them to inquire into the *Duration*. And this Inquiry

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\* Attendis ad dies tuos paucos, & diebus tuis paucis vis impleri omnia.

† Implebit Deus tempore suo. *S. Aug. in Ps. 91.*

will lead them to examine what Grounds there are to believe there is a Revelation sufficiently attested, which teaches that the Duration will be eternal. For nothing can demand a more serious Inquiry, than to examine whether our future Happiness or Misery will be endless. However, independently of Revelation, it may not be improper to make here this farther Remark: That GOD being own'd the Author of our Being, and since it is evident in Fact, that we are of a Being capable of knowing and loving GOD, it is a very natural Inference, that we must be the Objects of his Pleasure or Displeasure in proportion to our complying with, or our neglect of our Obligation to love him. Hence it will also be natural to conclude, not only a future, but an eternal State of our Souls in another Life. For, if at the end of this, they are found to have complied with the Duty of loving GOD, it cannot be imagined that GOD will annihilate them, and put an end to their Love of him. The Soul that loves him cannot but wish to love him for ever. There is nothing in the Love of GOD but what is agreeable to Reason. We cannot conceive it but as a Misery to be deprived of continuing to love so aimable an Object. Nor can it be conceived that GOD should  
either

either cease to be pleased with our Love, or that he should inflict such a Misery upon Souls that are faithful to him in their Love. If therefore at the Term of this Life (which all generally, even *Deists*, do in a manner naturally apprehend to be the Term of our *Probation* or *Tryal*) he finds we love him, we can have no Reason to imagine he will ever annihilate us, and make us cease to love him. Can it be suspected he will extinguish a Flame which he may so justly Will, should continue for ever? Or afflict a faithful Soul with what she cannot but dread as an excessive Misery, the being deprived of loving him, and being loved by him? On the other hand, Annihilation compared with eternal Duration of suffering, cannot be but an Object of Desire to the Wicked. They consequently can have no more Reason to hope, after the Term of their Tryal, that God will put an end to their Punishments for not loving him, than the Good to fear he will put an end to the Reward of their Love, by destroying their Being or their Love.

CRITOM. Supposing this Life to be a time of *Probation*, and the Term of it to be a Term of our Tryal (both which Points seem to stand upon a general Consent). I



cannot see any Reason to imagine a future Annihilation. What changes our future State may be subject to, as to some things, is more than I can determine. But whether it will be in the main, a State of eternal Misery, or of eternal Happiness, deserves certainly, as you said, our most serious Inquiry. I told you before, it is that which chiefly determined me to a full Search into Religion. But before we proceed more particularly to reveal'd Religion, I cannot but take notice here, that some as effectually set aside all future Rewards and Punishments by denying *Free-will*, as can be done by denying the Immortality of the Soul. They own a GOD, they extol his Goodness and Wisdom; but then they add, that he would neither be Good nor Wise, if he had given Man *Free-will*, that is, a Power to sin, to run off from the end of his Creation, to pervert Order, and lose himself eternally. They therefore pretend, that we are *invincibly*, and *unavoidably* necessitated to chuse what pleases us most.

EUDOX. This System indeed, if they could really persuade themselves into it, would readily free them from all Apprehensions of a future State. All Liberty of Choice being taken away, there would be no Merit, no Blame, no Punishment. But  
how

how is it possible they can think it more inconsistent with the Wisdom of GOD to leave Men at Liberty, than to necessitate them to things the most opposite to Reason? The necessity of doing a thing, would excuse Men from Blame; for who can be blamed for doing what he is forced to? But where can be the Excuse for an infinitely good and reasonable Being, that should force Man to act contrary to Reason? Nothing can be more strangely inconsistent than to deny Liberty, because a wise GOD cannot leave Man free to act against Reason, and then to suppose that GOD has necessitated him to act against Reason?

CRITOM. The Truth of the Matter is, as I have ever thought, it is not possible for those Men to doubt seriously of human Liberty. No one can indeed question, but GOD could have created us so as to be necessarily determined and fix'd to Good. It is no less certain, that he has not done it. We have an intimate Conviction, that in many Cases we have a real Liberty to chuse Good or Bad; it is as impossible to doubt of this, as it is to doubt of our own Existence. Sophisms may puzzle us, Disputes may confound our Imaginations, and make us fancy a sort of a Doubt; but in Practice

we can no more doubt of our Liberty, than we can question whether Men have Eyes, or Arms, or Bodies.

EUDOX. When therefore one who would pass for a profound Philosophical *Deist* would pretend to deny Man's Free-will, there is no need to dispute with him. There will need no more to confute him, than to reduce him \* to such obvious Suppositions as will presently make him confute himself, and shew, that he does not really question the Liberty he pretends to deny. Let us suppose a Friend has betray'd him. (Tho' one who thinks Men have no Liberty, cannot think he has any Friend.) In that Case, he complains of the Treachery. You tell him he is unreasonable to make such Complaints; because, in his own pretended Principles, his Friend only did what he was necessitated to, and could not help. Will the profound Disputant be satisfied, and blame the Treachery no more? It is manifest that whatever he may have pretended in the Dispute, he will in Fact suppose that his Friend might have done otherwise, and that therefore he has just Reason

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\* The Archbishop of Cambray in the above-cited Letters.

to complain of him. Thus he will confute himself, and shew, that notwithstanding his imaginary subtle Doubts, he is at the bottom convinced, that Men have Liberty.

CRITOM. If any thing farther were to be said to such an odd Philosopher, I would ask him, if he never deliberates, never gives, nor never takes Advice? If he never does, how can he be Wise? If he does, how can he think himself Wise? For what can be a greater Folly than to deliberate where we have no Liberty to chuse, but are necessarily determin'd to one Side? All Deliberations, all Advice, all Laws, are most foolish things, if we have no Liberty. If Men are not free to Good or Evil, there is no such thing to them, in a moral Sense. If an invincible Necessity makes us chuse whatever we do, we cannot be answerable either to GOD or Man for any of our Actions, any more than my Watch is answerable morally for the Motion of its Wheels. If you gave the Philosopher, who should pretend to deny Free-will, a Blow with your Cane, he would think himself a Fool to complain of your Cane; but he would think himself well ground'd to complain of you. Whence this Difference? Because, in Spite of all his Arguments,



he is convinced you have Liberty, and your Cane has none. Here all his Sophisms are confuted, and it is needless to argue with him upon a Point wherein he stands so plainly self-convicted in innumerable Occasions of Life.

EUDOX. When therefore they ask how GOD, who is infinitely Good and Wise, could leave Man at Liberty to do what is Bad, the Answer is, that however hard it may be to explain the Difficulties fully, they can be no just Grounds to deny Liberty. The Question falls no less upon them, in their Supposition of our acting by Necessity. For it is equally, or rather more difficult to explain how infinite Goodness could necessitate Man to Evil, than how he could leave him at Liberty to chuse it. Nothing is plainer in Fact, than that Men often do what is Ill, and that those *Libertines*, who pretend to deny Free-will, are in Fact forced to own it. These Facts being evident, and the *Deists* who make this Objection, granting that GOD is infinitely Good, they must grant no less than we must, that GOD best knows what is consistent with his infinite Perfections. Consequently, that Liberty is so, since we cannot doubt of our having Liberty. Our finite and weak Reason must therefore

therefore be silent, and submit, where GOD has decided the Matter by plain Fact. If we cannot fully explain how Liberty, which is the Source of so many Disorders, is consistent with the supreme Wisdom and Goodness of him who is the essential Source and Lover of Order, yet at the same time our Reason teaches us humbly to submit, and believe what we cannot fully explain. Reason may doubt of the Ways of explaining Liberty, but it cannot doubt of the Thing itself. Thus we cannot doubt of the Reality of material Things; but whoever knows any thing of Philosophy, knows, that whether you suppose them made of indivisible Points, or of Parts infinitely divisible, you meet with unsurmountable Difficulties.

CRITOM. Nothing can be more plain than that it is intirely unreasonable to pretend a Doubt upon things that are plain in Fact, or proved by manifest Reasons, whatever Obscurity or Difficulty there may be in explaining their Consistency with the Attributes of GOD.

EUDOX. I am very glad to see you so fixt in this Reflection of the Unreasonableness of rejecting things that are sufficiently proved, on account of great Difficulties in reconciling

reconciling them with the divine Perfections. This Reflection kept well in your Mind, will be of great Use when we come to speak of Christianity, in Regard to its Mysteries. It will be of Moment too, frequently to observe there are unexplicable Mysteries in Nature. You will then be disposed to wonder less, that there should be Mysteries in Revelations. And among Mysteries in Nature, and in meer natural Religion, you may place this of *Free-will*. The Difficulty of shewing, by way of clear Explanation, how it is consistent with the Goodness of God, can no more make you Doubt of it, than the Difficulty of explaining Motion can make you doubt of your Power to move.

CRITOM. They certainly cannot. And I have moreover often thought it very remarkably incoherent in *Deists* to be sometimes extolling a moral Life, and at other times destroying Free-will. For without Free-will, there is no conceiving Men to be what is properly meant by *moral Agents*. Without it there can be no more Virtue in what they do, than we can conceive Virtue of a moral Kind in the Rays of the Sun casting Light around us. In a Word: If Liberty is the Origin of Bad, it is also the  
Origin

Origin of Good in Man. Now if any one should ask how GOD can give Man a Power of doing Good, the Question would immediately appear to be Impertinent. Nor is it less impertinent at the Bottom, to ask how he can give us a Power of doing moral Evil. For the very being moral virtuous Agents, implies a Power of chusing Good or Evil. And if *Deists*, who object against Free-will, do not suppose Men to be properly moral Agents, what a *Farce* do they make in talking as they do, of the Law of Reason, of the Love of Virtue, and of the Obligation of Men to keep up to the Rules of Morality?

EUDOX. No more, methinks, need be added upon this Point, unless perhaps to observe, that when they ask, why GOD did not fix Mens Minds *unalterably* to Good, they might as well ask, why he did not make them as perfect, or infinitely more perfect than *Angels*. It is sufficient to remark, that the Goodness of GOD convinces us that Men, tho' not fixt in Good, have *sufficient* Power to comply with their Duty; and consequently have no Reason to complain of any but themselves, if they transgress and attain not the final End of their Creation.

CRITOM.



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CRITOM. Since the Message now brought to me, not only calls me away at present, but will oblige me to be out of Town for two or three Days, I must take leave of you till *Monday* next at least.

EUDOX. I shall be glad to see you as soon as your Affairs will allow me that Pleasure.



DEISM

CRITOM.



**DEISM**  
**AND**  
**CHRISTIANITY**  
**FAIRLY CONSIDER'D, &c.**

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**DIALOGUE III.**  
**BETWEEN**  
**CRITOMACHUS and EUDOXUS.**  
**CRITOMACHUS.**



**N** **EITHER** Business nor Diversion (and I have had a considerable Share of both since my Absence) have diminish'd my Eagerness to pursue the Inquiry I have enter'd upon with Regard to Religion. As no Business is so important, so  
no

no Conversation is so agreeable to me as upon that Subject.

EUDOX. I am persuaded it will be still more so as you advance. What we have hitherto discoursed on has been almost intirely upon such Heads, as *Deists* often urge to abate in themselves and others, the Force of such Notions as lead to the Belief of a reveal'd Religion in General. We will now come to a more immediate Consideration of the *Christian Religion* in particular, unless perhaps you have still some general Heads remaining which you would have us previously consider.

CRITOM. None occur to me at present. Let us therefore proceed to that great Point.

EUDOX. The Proofs that Christianity is from GOD, have been frequently given in different Lights by the greatest Men, both among the Ancients and Moderns. Nor is it easy to determine in what View they appear with most Light and Strength. But it will not be hard to propose them to you in two or three different Ways, in such a manner, as will comprise the Substance of all, and be sufficient for a full Conviction.

CRITOM. Take your own Method; leaving me the Liberty to offer such Doubts or Queries as may occur.

EUDOX.

EUDOX. Not even the most incredulous *Deists* can pretend to doubt whether there was such a Person as was known in the World by the Name of *JESUS CHRIST*, and who declared himself to be sent from God to teach Men the Way of Salvation. They know, that according to the Books well known under the Name of the *New Testament*, he wrought a great Number of Miracles the most surprizing, in Confirmation of the Religion he taught, exercising a wonderful Power over Seas and Winds, and Sickness and Death: That his whole Conduct was most irreproachable, his Doctrine admirably moral and holy: That, according to those same Books, he foretold his Death and Resurrection, and in Effect rose again, confirm'd what he had taught before, and sent his *Apostles* to preach his Doctrine, giving them Power to testify, even by greater Miracles than he had wrought himself, and to establish his Religion against the greatest Opposition. Here then, dear *Critomachus*, in your serious Thoughts make to yourself frequently, and answer impartially the following Questions. When *CHRIST* at the Age of thirty, after an obscure Life began to appear in Publick, what was his Design? It was to preach and establish a New Religion, rigid in its Precepts;



Precepts, obscure in its Myſteries, contrary in many Things to all the Religions in the World, as much as to all the vicious Inclinations and Paſſions of Men. What was he to do to bring this to Effect? By himſelf and his Apoſtles, he was to break through the moſt ſtrong and univerſal Oppoſition from all the Powers of the World: The Wiſdom of *Philophers*, the Cunning of *Politicians*, the Authority of *Sovereigns*, the Cruelty of *Tyrants*, the raging Zeal of *Idolaters*, the Impiety and Vices of the *Wicked*. They conquer'd all this Oppoſition, and eſtabliſh'd their Religion all over the World. By what Means? By ſuch as were in many reſpects the moſt unlikely that could be imagined. What can be concluded, but that ſuch a Wonder could not be effected by natural Powers? It muſt therefore be the Effect of a Power divine. *St. Chryſoſtom*, after having diſcourſed to this Effect, \* goes on to ask what you would

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\* Indocti, illiterati, è longinqua Paeſtinae regione profecti, Philoſophos, rhetores, viros in docendo graviffimos, a propriis ejicientes, omnes brevi ſuperaverunt, cum tot imminerent pericula, populi & reges infeſtiſſimi, natura ipſa repugnans, temporis vetuſtas longa, & vehementior conſuetudinis pugna, armati dæmones, diabolus infeſtus & univerſa commovens, reges ſcilicet, principes, populos, gentes, civitates, Barbaros, *Græcos*, Philoſophos,

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would think if a dozen weak Men, Men intirely unexperienced in all the Arts of War, without Arms, should attack and defeat vast Armies of the ablest Men under eminent Generals, animated to resist by all that could be Dear or Sacred to them; and this not only in one Place, but in vast Numbers of different Countries, and in Engagements with innumerable such Armies; still conquering all: Would you think such Victories could be gain'd by any thing but divine Power? Yet the Victories of the Apostles, continues that most judicious and eloquent Doctor, were still more admirable. † The like Arguments he urges farther in that and the two next Homilies, and again in the Seventh; all which well deserve your private and serious Reading.

CRITOM. I certainly will consider them, and with that Impartiality, which my sincere Resolution of a full Search into Religion, requires. In the mean while give me leave to observe to you, that altho' *Deists* do not,

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† Atqui Apostolorum Trophæum, longè illo admirabilius. *Ibid.*

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nor



nor can possibly deny, that Christianity was propagated, and continues in a great part of the World, yet they boggle several different ways, about the Miracles by which you say it was establish'd. The very mention of a *Miracle* sets them upon the Sneer, and they think all are answer'd by crying out *Tricks*, and *Forgery*.

EUDOX. They do so. But nothing betrays their Weakness more. By force of Arms, by Ignorance, by indulging of Mens darling Vices, false Religions may be propagated, like *Mahometanism*, without Miracles. Such a Religion as the *Christian*, and in such Circumstances as this particularly was propagated, it is not possible. It began in learned Times, when all Power was against it, and all Passions still more. In such Circumstances, how could things, otherwise the most difficult and incredible, be believed without Miracles? \* Such things were to be attested with the most evident Miracles, or Christianity must of itself have been so credible, as to need no Miracles to prove it. Either way the In-

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\* Unde temporibus eruditis, & omne quod fieri non potest respuentibus, sine ullis miraculis nimium mirabiliter incredibilia credidit mundus? S. Aug. de Civ. Dei. l. 22. c. 8.

credulity of *Deists* is plainly confuted. † To pretend the Miracles we allege from the *Evangelists* were Forgeries of them, and the first *Christians*, combined to publish them for the Honour of their Master, can be attributed to nothing but a strange Weakness, or a stranger Impiety. What Interest could they hope from publishing such Wonders, if they knew them to be false? To raise their Master's Credit? Alas! it must have ruin'd both his, and their own. Many of the Facts are such as were done in Publick. And how could they hope to be believed, while so many could declare against them, in such notorious Cases? The *Jews* and *Gentiles* were highly enraged against them already. Would they be softned, much less converted, by Men so wicked, or so weak, or so shameless, as to endeavour it by the most notorious Forgeries? What could they expect but Ignominy, Persecutions and Death? Far therefore from any Reason to think they would have publish'd such Miracles if they had known them to

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† Brevis est igitur nostra complexio. Aut incredibili rei quæ non videbatur, alia incredibilia, quæ tamen fiebant & videbantur, fecerunt fidem: aut certè res ita credibilis, ut nullis quibus probaretur miraculis indigeret, istorum nimiam redarguit infidelitatem. *Ibid.*

be False, there is great Reason to wonder they dared to publish them, even being convinced they were true. Yet they did it at the Expence of their Lives, and confirm'd their Testimony with their Blood. Nor were there ever any Histories in the World written with greater Tokens of Candor and Sincerity, and less Appearance of Craft or Forgery. They neither conceal, dissemble, nor excuse their own Failures, or the Poverty, or Anguish, or Ignominies of their Master. They even explain these, more fully than his Miracles; they express no Resentment or Revenge against their Master's Enemies or their own. Such Sincerity, such Calmness, are strong Proofs they were not led with Passion, but with Truth; and great Marks of irreproachable Witnesses of Facts for which they were ready to suffer, and did suffer, even with Joy, the greatest Torments.

CRITOM. But you well know, that *Deists* will still be ready to reply, that the Facts upon which the Proof of Christianity stands, are related by the Apostles or Disciples of *CHRIST*; that Disciples, fond of an engaging Master, may be very liable to great Suspicions in their Accounts in his Favour; especially where they have a great Share of the Honour from the Wonders

Wonders said to be wrought by him, and by themselves, and their Party. Is it any wonder that Men should flatter themselves or their Masters, in such Cases?

EUDOX. There is no wonder at all that Men should flatter their Master and themselves in relating a few particular, passing, obscure Facts, where there might be little Danger of their being convicted of Falsity, or of suffering if the Forgery should be discover'd. But with regard to Publick, illustrious, permanent Facts, of which thousands must have been Witnesses (such as the Multiplication of Loaves, such as suddenly talking all Languages, &c.) Facts for which they knew they must suffer the most cruel Deaths; in such Cases it is not possible that Flattery and Self-love, or Love of the most engaging Master, should make them capable of extravagant Fictions, Fictions so liable to be discover'd, Fictions whereof the Imposture must have been so very obviously found out; or rather Fictions wherein they never could hope, or find any Credit. Take the Fact of *CHRIST's Resurrection*; consider it every way you please. Turn your Imagination and Doubts all possible ways you can invent. Then see if you can think, that a few fearful, poor Men who had so lately abandoned their Master,



Master, should soon after conspire in a fixt, steady, united Design, first to affirm he was risen again, then to confirm the Assertion by pretending such Wonders as never were seen or heard in the World; a Design of opposing the Malice of their own Nation already inflamed against them, and then opposing all the Powers of the World, to change the Religion of the Universe, to establish a new one so severe, so mortifying, so opposite to the Notions, the Passions, the Interests of Men, a Religion that taught the *Gentiles* to detest, what till then they adored, to despise what they loved, to love their Enemies, and to hate themselves; can you imagine such Men capable of a concerted Project of such a nature, capable of pursuing it at the Expence of their Repose, their Honour, and their Life; capable, infine, of bringing it to bear, to be embraced and believed with the most unshaken Firmness, and all over the World?

CRITOM. It must be own'd, that supposing them capable of framing such a Project, yet it must have been the utmost Extravagance and Folly to flatter themselves with Hopes of succeeding in the Attempt. Had there been nothing else for them to fear, they could not but apprehend, that among the great Number of  
Confederates,

Confederates, who must have been engaged to attest the Resurrection of *CHRIST*, and the Miracles pretended, some of those Confederates by Fear, or Interest, or a natural Return of common Honesty, would discover the Imposture, if it had been such.

*EUDOX.* Be they supposed, however, capable of thinking they had no Discovery to apprehend from any among such Numbers combined in a Design so strange, and if forged, so vile; yet what Advantage could they expect from it? None, sure, from *GOD*. They could not hope he would reward such impious Falsties. None in this World in proposing a Scheme so opposite to all the World, and pretending to persuade it by Facts, whereof the Forgery must have been immediately manifest to thousands. What Appearance could they see of drawing the wisest Men into the Belief of such a Religion, by such forged Miracles? Could Men without Riches, without Power, or Learning, or Address, hope to succeed in such an Enterprize? If they hoped any worldly Advantage by such an Attempt, their Sufferings must soon have put an end to such Hopes. Men, who in all things else, were irreproachable in their Morals, could they ground their preaching up the most eminent Sanctity, on Facts which

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they

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they knew to be false, and whereof the Falsity must have been so easily discover'd? Besides: They frequently declared they had a Power to confirm by Miracles the Doctrines they preach'd; to cure Diseases, to speak all Languages, and even to communicate to others those Gifts, which they call'd the Gifts of the HOLY GHOST. What could be more easy, than for many thousands of People to judge whether they really perform'd such Wonders?

CRITOM. It has often surpris'd me to observe how puzzled and various the *Deists* of my Acquaintance have been in their Replies to such Reflections. Sometimes they would be for making the Apostles and Disciples cunning and artful Knaves. But where can be the Cunning and Art in maintaining false Facts of such a sort as must be the most easily discover'd, I will not say by very cunning Men, but by any that were not absolutely stupid? At other times, they would be for supposing them honest, plain, undesigning Men; but weak, visionary, easily impos'd upon by their Imagination, and a Spirit of *Enthusiasm*.

EUDOX. Yet certainly those *Deists* must needs have been sensible, that *Enthusiasts* could never deceive the World in such Facts as are alleged in the present Case. Suppose the

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the Infatuation as great as you please in the Disciples (tho' contrary to all appearances) yet they could not spread the Delusion so universally, and in such Facts as must have been easily judged of by vast Numbers. Such *Deists* must be for very thorough Work, and must make not only the Disciples, but in a manner all the World, *Enthusiasts*. This is indeed a Name, and an Accusation which *Deists* are often fond of. But they make it of no Force, by stretching it too far. Take but one single Instance: Is it any way possible, that above a hundred Persons assembled at *Pentecost*, should all at once run into one uniform Whim of imagining without any Reality, that a great Gust of Wind arose, that fiery Tongues appear'd on every one's Head, and that they began to speak all Languages? Whims of visionary People are various, not uniform. *Enthusiasts* may be thought to have heated Imaginations. But whatever great Effects, in some Kinds, *Deists* may be willing to attribute to *Enthusiasm*, sure, they do not imagine it can suddenly make illiterate Men speak *Hebrew, Greek, Arabick*, and a hundred other Languages. If some Persons may fancy themselves to speak those Languages, yet the Heat of their Heads could not suddenly turn the Heads



of several thousand Hearers, and make them imagine they all heard their own Language. If such a Fancy can enter into the Heads of *Deists*, they are themselves the greatest *Enthusiasts* that ever were known in the World.

CRITOM. The Impossibility of accounting for such Facts, either upon the foot of Art and Knavery, or that of Weakness and *Enthusiastic* Folly, is very clear. But what if *Deists* should own, that altho' they cannot pretend to clear up the Account in either of those Ways, yet there are other Difficulties against Miracles that make them dubious at least? Sometimes when closely press'd with the Authority of Histories that relate them, they will say, that if such Histories cannot be intirely rejected upon evident Exceptions to the Historians, yet it may be doubted, whether the Wonders related were really Miracles; that is, *supernatural* Effects: That you must own they might have been at the Bottom, brought about not by any divine special Power, but by some natural *Coïncidence* of latent, hidden, uncommon Powers of Nature; since you cannot pretend to know all the Extent, and all the possible secret Concurrences of natural Powers. It cannot therefore be certain, that such strange Effects are Miracles.

And

And to People ignorant of the Experiments of the *Load-stone*, for Example, many of them may be so exhibited to them, as to appear miraculous.

EUDOX. After all that can be said of this Kind, it cannot be denied that great Numbers of the wisest Men have been convinced, that a great many Miracles have been wrought. They well knew that we are ignorant of the utmost Extent of natural Powers. Yet they judg'd it a Folly to doubt of the Reality of Miracles in many Cases, wherein they saw the stated Course of Nature was over-ruled in so particular a manner, and in such Circumstances as could leave no room to suspect it was by any secret Coïncidence of meer natural Causes. In Effect, the more you have recourse to such unknown Powers, the more impossible you must own it was for the Apostles, ignorant and illiterate as they were, to be able so frequently, and in so many occasional Circumstances, to apply to their own Purposes, such a Coïncidence of hidden Causes. An immediate, frequent, direct Application of such natural Causes, would itself be a great Miracle; and the greater, the more unknown you suppose those Powers to be. Nothing but a supernatural Power could direct to such an Application of

hidden Causes. Natural Sagacity could not enable such illiterate Men to so precise, so frequent, so particular, so determinate Uses of things so very latent. Pretending therefore to account for the miraculous Facts of *CHRIST* and his *Apostles*, without the Intervention and Direction of a supernatural Power, is so very extravagant, that it need not be any farther exposed. The Experiments of the Load-stone, and many other strange things in Nature, may in some Occasions be so used as to have an Appearance of Miracles to vulgar Eyes. But they will never make any wise Man doubt whether the Miracles, so often wrought in favour of Christianity, were done without a divine Power and Direction. There are so many Differences between Christian Miracles and such uncommon things in Nature, as can leave no Doubt but those cannot possibly be accounted for by meer Chance, or by meer Nature.

C R I T O M. Sometimes *Deists* will ask farther, how you can tell that what you allege as Miracles, was not by the Agency and Direction of *Evil Spirits*. You own there are such Spirits, and that they often exercise wonderful Powers.

E U D O X. We do so. But then we affirm they never did, nor can do it without the Permission

Permission of GOD ; and we are sure GOD will not permit them to do it in such Circumstances as would unavoidably be taken by the best, and the wisest of Men, for Proofs that GOD himself attested the Truth of particular Doctrines. It is plain, that neither his Veracity, nor Wisdom, nor Goodness, can permit them to work such Wonders in Testimony of false Doctrines, as could not be distinguish'd from his divine Testimony in Favour of Truth.

CRITOM. Upon what you was mentioning a little before, I forgot to observe to you, that when you say the Christian Miracles have been believed by the wisest of Men, there are *Deists* who have found in their *Oracle*, a Couple of *Greek Words*, which they think are of great Force. They tell you it is a sort of a Proverb, and they extol the Wisdom of it, *Σάματα μᾶστις*. This they will be so obliging as to Interpret for you, and tell you it means, *Miracles for Fools, Reasons for wise Men*.

EUDOX. They would have been more kind to themselves in leaving their two *Greek Words* uninterpreted, and indeed, unmention'd. Let us leave them to consider, in their better Moments, how wise a thing it is in them, thus to call those who have believed Miracles, by the Name of



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*Fools.* Have not all the wisest Persons of the Christian World ever alleged them as manifest Proofs of their Religion? But setting aside the Politeness of such *Deists* as give so gross a Title to such Numbers of wise Men, I would desire they would let us know, what Appearance of Argument they have to prove Miracles in general are impossible or ridiculous. It cannot be doubted but that GOD *Almighty* can cause Effects above all the Power of natural Agents; and can suspend, or controul the common Laws of Nature? Whether such things have been done by his divine Power, must be examined by the same Methods and Grounds as other *Facts* are evidenced or confuted. Sneers and unbecoming Language are no Arguments but against those who use them. And when they tell us that weak People often take things for Miracles which are only *Tricks* and *Cheats*, we must desire them to remember, that weak People are also apt to take *Sophisms* for Reasons. Must we therefore conclude, there are no true Reasons to be depended on? Where is the Reason in concluding there are no true Miracles, because there have been some forged ones, and some have believed them? Are there no true Histories, because there are *Romances*? Are there no sincere Men, because

because there are Cheats? Is there no true, because there is false Coin in the World?

CRITOM. I will not repeat in what manner (for I own it is too gross) *Deists* sometimes represent the Apostles as subject to various Passions; and thence infer, they might be as subject to lying and dissembling as other Men. But to speak with those who express themselves with any tolerable Decency; while *Deists* look upon the Apostles as meer uninspired Writers, and as neither *impeccable* nor *infallible*, may they not reasonably doubt or deny things related by them, as they may in other Writers?

EUDOX. They may. But if the apostolical Histories are as credible every way (and they certainly are so) as any Histories in the World, is it not Folly to disbelieve them, and yet credit others who cannot deserve it more upon any account? However peccable and fallible other Historians have been, they cannot reasonably be disbelieved in general. It will therefore be unreasonable to disbelieve universally either the *Evangelists* or other eminent Men who relate Miracles wrought in Proof of Christianity, even considering them on the foot of meer human Authority. Were *Cæsar* or *Salust*, *impeccable*? Were they *infallible*? Must their historical Credit be

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void,

void, because they were subject to Failings and Errors?

C R I T O M. Yet here again, without entring into such general Harangues or Sneers, as *Deists* are pleased sometimes to make upon *Priest-craft* or *Pious-frauds*, may they not reasonably doubt, whether the Writings you call *Apostolical* have been handed down to us uncorrupted? If they are not genuine, if Corruptions have crept in, how shall we distinguish the true from false Accounts? Suppose the Apostles as good and honest as you please, yet if their Writings have been corrupted, these may be question'd, without any Injury to them.

E U D O X. Craft, and Fraud, and Corruption there may, doubtless, be in every thing, if we speak of what is naturally possible. But must we therefore be ever suspicious, and doubtful, and never admit of any Facts, or Laws, because there have been many Forgeries? Sure our national *Records* are no less capable of Corruptions, in the nature of things, than *Scripture*. If *Deists* upon a Tryal in our *Courts* should resume their Harangues upon *Law-craft*, and Frauds, and Corruptions, would they be heard? Would their calling out for *Demonstrations*, acquit them? If they added insolent and ridiculing Sneers, would they be

be suffer'd? Would Possibilities of Laws and Precedents being corrupted, excuse them? And what will such Pleas help them at the Tribunal of GOD? After all they can say of the Possibility of Forgieries, they neither can doubt of the chief Facts of the *Roman* History, for Example, and if they did pretend it, they would be ridiculous; nor can such Possibilities make it more allowable to pretend Doubts upon the chief Facts that evidence Christianity.

CRITOM. In Effect, and to speak my Mind sincerely, tho' I have often heard *Deists* talk much of possible Corruptions of *Scripture*, I could never have any Notion that it could be liable to any reasonable Doubts of its being corrupted in the main Points. The more sacred it ever was in the Opinion of Christians, the more they themselves, and their Adversaries too, must have been watchful to guard against any such Corruptions. Had the Christians, upon receiving the Gospels from those who taught them Christianity, found them to contain false Facts, or if they had found the Apostles to approve of Writings which contain'd false Narratives, the first Christians would have believed neither the *Gospels*, nor the *Apostles*. And those Writings being once received as *Divine*, any material Corruption  
that



that should be perceived to creep in, would immediately be rejected. Neither would the Adversaries of Christianity be much less watchful to observe, whether those Writings were corrupted. For if they had found any thing material of that Kind, they would have needed no other Proof against the Gospels, and consequently against Christianity too.

EUDOX. What you have now observed is an unanswerable Proof, that the main Points of Scripture (especially as to Facts) are uncorrupted; the Interest both of Christians and their Adversaries, being an equal Guard against such Corruptions. I said, especially as to Facts, because Facts are more open to general Observation, than meer doctrinal Points. Tho' it is also manifest that meer doctrinal Points of Moment, if not so generally, yet would be sufficiently safe from Corruptions, both from the Observation of Christians themselves, and their Adversaries. And this cannot be denied, considering the Scripture only in the same natural View as we consider other Writings of Moment. But if farther we consider, that on one hand the wonderful Propagation of Christianity proves it to be the Work of God, and on the other, that this Church thus establish'd by divine Power,  
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has always held the *Scripture* to be uncorrupted in all material Points; it will follow, that we have no less Security of the *Scripture* being the *Word* of GOD, than we have of Christianity being the *Work* of GOD. \*

CRITOM. For my own Part, as I have signified already, I can see no more Reason to doubt of the Genuineness of *Scripture*, than of other Histories that are the most uncontested. But you will allow me to observe upon your last Words, that a *Deist* not unacquainted with the Disputes between different Bodies professing Christianity in general, will be apt to say, you run in a *Circle*; at one time proving the Church by *Scripture*, and at other times proving the *Scripture* by the Church.

EUDOX. I am not here to inquire how far any may, in the heat of *Controversies*, run into a very wrong *Jingle* about a *Circle* of such a nature. It is my present Business only to shew, that in the Case before us with *Deists*, nothing can be more frivolous. And indeed it is very plain there is no appearance of a vicious Circle, in first proving the Church independently of the

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\* Miracula ut fidem facerent innotuerunt; hæc per fidem quam fecerunt, multò clarius innotescunt. *S. Aug. de Civ. l. 22. c. 8.*

Scripture, as a visible Body professing a Religion confirm'd by divine Power, and then proving the Scripture from the Authority of that Church so establish'd. It was already establish'd into a very visible and large Body, before the Scripture was wrote. And the Scripture, as to the historical Facts (which are the Points we are now upon with *Deists*) are a Narrative of those things by which Christianity was already establish'd. The Church, or the Body of Christians, knew by what wonderful Facts they were brought to Christianity. It could tell whether the Account of those Facts was true. It received those Narratives as true; it declares them to be genuine. The Scriptures being thus declared true, are, in their Turn, *Records* whereof the Truth was attested both by the Persons concern'd, and by their Adversaries never being able to shew they were adulterated in any thing Material. Where is there any Shadow of a vicious Circle? Be it as insignificant a Proof, as you please, of *Peter's* Integrity, to affirm it because *Paul* attests it, and then to affirm *Paul's* Integrity, meerly because *Peter* attests it; yet if the Integrity of both is sufficiently evidenced by other Proofs, their mutual Testimony will be a Confirmation of their Integrity, without any Danger of running,

*The author has broken the circle, & not having a good way of getting out of it.*

running, in what the *Schools* call, a *vicious Circle*. But without entring any farther into this Point, what has been already observed is sufficient against *Deists*, as to the Genuineness of the Scripture-History, that it has most certainly as good Proofs of it, as the History of *Livy*, for Example. Consequently, as it would be ridiculous to pretend that his History has not sufficient Evidence to claim our Belief in the main, so it would be equally ridiculous, at least, not to allow the same to Scripture.

CRITOM. Let this be granted (as indeed it cannot reasonably be denied) yet no History is to be credited where it relates any thing in Confirmation of what is inconsistent with Reason. Hence *Deists* argue thus: Before we can believe Miracles to be true, we must first see that the things they are brought to prove are consistent with Reason: And if we already see the Doctrines are consistent with Reason, and consequently true, what need will there be of Miracles? And will God work them needlessly?

EUDOX. Such Arguments, which they perhaps think very sharp, will upon a little Reflection, appear exceedingly weak. Among the Doctrines of Christianity some are evident to natural Reason, others may  
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be inferred with sufficient Clearness from Principles of Reason, others are above the reach of meer natural Reason, and not knowable but by Revelation. Where Reason is a sufficient Guide, we do not say there is need of Miracles. In this respect my Lord *Bacon* has observed, that he does not remember any Miracle wrought to prove the Existence of God ; that Truth being clear to meer Reason. However it cannot be denied but that even where Truths are sufficiently discoverable by human Reason, and therefore do not absolutely require Miracles, yet Miracles may confirm those Truths, and press them more strongly on the Mind, and influence both our Thoughts and Actions in a more lively manner. In this regard they may be needless (meaning not absolutely necessary) and yet be neither useless nor superfluous. But taking the whole *System* of Christian Doctrine, Miracles are requisite to attest such Truths of it, as we cannot discover by Reason alone. Here then, when we say the Truth of Doctrines attested by Miracles must be examined by Reason, we do not mean that Reason must first prove all things reveal'd, and then make us believe the Miracles. No: We only mean, that Reason must first see whether any thing contrary  
to

Dial. III. *Fairly Consider'd, &c.* 113

to Reason, is pretended to be attested by Miracles. For we know that GOD, who is essentially reasonable, can attest nothing contrary to Reason. But where there does not appear any Contradiction, the things contain'd in that System may be true, tho' the *direct* Truth of them does not appear to us, because above our Comprehension. But tho' above our Comprehension, we must believe them when they are found to be attested by a divine Authority. For we know GOD can reveal more than we know by meer natural Reason. Whether he has reveal'd such things must be examined by Reason, as we examine other Facts.

CRITOM. Still they will be urging with their *Oracle*, that it is an odd *Jumble* to prove the Truth of the Doctrine by Miracles, and at the same time to prove the Miracles are true, because the Doctrines they attest, are so.

EUDOX. There is no manner of Jumble here, but what is of their own making. We do not prove all the Doctrines by Reason. We own that some of them cannot be proved by meer Reason. These we prove by shewing they are attested by the Authority of GOD. That they are so attested, we prove by the same Methods as we do the Reality of other Facts. He must  
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be fond of *Jumbles*, who imagines there is any in such a Proceeding. We allege Reasons for what we *Understand*, and Authority for what we *Believe*. \* When a Man of undoubted Credit and Knowledge tells you some *mathematical* Propositions whereof you comprehend some, but not others, yet you believe these upon his Authority. No Authority would make you believe them, if they were evidently against your Reason. But Authority may justly make you believe them, tho' obscure and difficult to you in themselves. In this Case will the *Deist* pretend to argue thus: Before I can believe the Authority of a Sir *Isaac Newton*, I must first see, whether his Propositions are consistent with Reason; and if I already see they are consistent, and consequently true, what need of his Authority? It would be impertinent in one little skill'd in *Mathematicks*, thus to argue against an eminent Man. What will it be to argue so against GOD? Will he say in the Case of Sir *Isaac's* Propositions; it is an *odd Jumble* to prove the Truth of them by his Authority, and at the same time to prove his Authority because his Proposi-

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\* Sicut quod intelligimus rationi debemus; sic quod credimus, autoritati. *S. Aug. l. de util. cred. cap. 11.*

tions are true? Why then will they argue thus in the Case of divine Revelations?

CRITOM. Some *Deists* will not trouble themselves with other Objections against Miracles, but seem to think they have a more compendious way of bringing the Dispute to an Issue. Look ye, Sir, said one of my Acquaintance to a *Clergyman*, you tell us of Prodigies wrought by the Apostles seventeen hundred Years ago. That is a long while since; such *Antiquities* are very subject to Suspicions: You who tell us you are those Apostles Successors, and invested with their Powers, do but work a few such Prodigies here before us, and we will immediately be your *Profelytes*. Then he added an old Proverb, *Hic Rhodus, hic Saltus*. What would you say to such a Disputant?

EUDOX. Truly, Sir, I would say very little till I found him more serious. It would be sufficient to tell him in the mean time, that St. *Austin*, who is universally allow'd, tho' a *Clergyman*, to have been a Man of great Wit and Learning, says, that those who still call for Prodigies to make them believe while all the World believes, are very strange Prodigies themselves. †

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† Quisquis adhuc prodigia, ut credat, inquit, magnum ipse prodigium est, qui mundo credente non credit. S. Aug. de Civ. lib. 22. cap. 8.



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May be I would just add: That when he met with any Clergymen who pretended to *all* the Powers of the Apostles, his *Latin* Proverb might be something to the purpose.

CRITOM. There is something of a more serious Appearance, and more deserving an Answer, in what some *Deists* say: That the Miracles in favour of Christianity seem to stand upon credible Authority, but that the incredible Mysteries of Christianity being cast into the other Scale, it is impossible for them to believe the whole Christian Scheme: That the most they can come to, is a kind of Suspence of Mind upon the whole; while the Incredibility of the Mysteries force them to with-hold, as strongly as the seeming Evidence of the Facts inclines to assent.

EUDOX. The Answer is very easy. I absolutely deny that a reasonable Suspence of Mind can be possible in the present Case. The Judgment of such Facts is so fully within the Cognizance of common Reason, that it is impossible to doubt of them. Subsequent, or included Difficulties may puzzle or amaze the Understanding, as to the *direct* Solution, but they can never make the Facts reasonably doubtful. Thus, that Motion is possible, and in Fact exists, is so certain that you cannot reasonably doubt  
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of it, however unexplicable may be the Difficulties it includes. In vain you would pretend that these Difficulties bring the matter to an even Balance, and that you cannot determine whether you can move or not.

CRITOM. If such is the Evidence of the Facts, how comes it that many doubt of them? Few, or rather none doubt of the Possibility of moving. Again: if the Evidence for Christianity is such, where can be the Freedom or Merit of Faith? We have no Freedom to dissent from Evidence; and no Merit without Freedom.

EUDOX. When I brought the Instance of Motion, it was to shew, that Difficulties included in the Explication of it could not be any reasonable Cause to doubt of the thing itself; but not that the Evidence is of such a Kind as to be of equal Influence upon all. The *experimental* Evidence we have of Motion strikes in a more lively and universal manner, than *Narrative* or *Historical* Evidence. Yet if experimental Evidence in one Case makes a Doubt absolutely and universally impossible in the case of Motion, historical Evidence makes at least a reasonable Doubt impossible; as it is not possible, for Example, that you should reasonably doubt of the chief Facts related  
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of *Cicero* or *Cæsar*; tho' at the same time it can scarce be question'd, but that if Men had the same Passions to indulge in raising pretended Doubts about those two *Romans*, as the *Deists* have in pretending Doubts of the Facts of *CHRIST* and his *Apostles*, they would have done it. As to the Freedom and Merit of Faith, it is needless, and foreign to the present Intent of our Conferences, to enter into a *Theological* Discussion of it. We need only observe, that the Evidence of Facts by which Christianity is attested, does not at all remove the Obscurity of its Mysteries. There consequently remains a Difficulty in Submission of our Understanding to things so far above our Comprehension; and consequently room for Liberty and Merit in believing. Tho' in the Motives of Credibility we see our *Obligation* to believe is evident, yet the *Objects* of our Faith in the Mysteries, remain unevident. There is therefore Merit both in believing such Mysteries, and in not letting either that Obscurity, or our Passions withdraw our due Attention from considering the Motives that shew our Obligation to believe.

CRITOM. But what would you say if *Deists* should (as indeed they frequently do) insist upon your giving direct Answers  
to

to their Objections against the *Trinity*, and *Incarnation*?

EUDOX. I would say just as I would to one who should pretend to doubt of the Possibility of Motion, or whether there ever was such a Man as *Julius Cæsar*. I would first insist upon my Right of affirming, that the thing is not seriously or reasonably question'd. Then, as far as I thought proper, proceed to such direct Answers as might seem to me the most reasonable; still lodging my *Caveat* that the Thing itself is never the less certain, however I might fail in giving such direct Answers as fully clear'd all Difficulties.

CRITOM. Give me leave, for my fuller and more immediate Satisfaction, to bring the matter to such determinate Instances as *Deists* frequently use. I will not give myself any of their ridiculing Airs. Such Airs never seem'd to me tolerable in matters so very serious. Setting those aside, what would you say to such Arguments as these? That *Unity* and *Trinity* in GOD seem to carry a plain Contradiction in the very Terms: That there seems no less a Contradiction in believing the same Person to be both GOD and Man: That GOD is Impassible and Immortal; Man both Passible and Mortal: GOD Immutable; Man Changeable.



Changeable. Who can conceive, who can believe these Opposites can meet in one and the same Person?

EUDOX. It certainly becomes every sensible Man to set aside all Levity of jesting in such important Matters. Ridicule is no Argument; it seldom enters but where Arguments are wanting. As to the Objections proposed, I would first beg leave to repeat what the best of our present Poets, and perhaps in the best of his Works, says of Poetry,

“ *A little Learning is a dangerous thing.*

“ *Drink deep, or taste not the Pierian Spring.*

“ *Here slender Draughts intoxicate the Brain,*

“ *And drinking largely sobers us again.*” \*

This applied to *Philosophy* and *Divinity*, will be what my Lord *Bacon* says (if I remember right, in his *Advancement of Learning*) that a little of them may lead Men to Infidelity, but a great deal of them will bring them back again. I would then, in the Method I was mentioning, insist upon it, that the Facts which prove Christianity to be divine Revelation, are unquestionable: That GOD best knows his own Nature, †

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\* *Essay on Criticism.*

† Cui magis de Deo, quàm Deo credam? *S. Ambr.*  
and

and whether a Distinction of Persons is impossible in a perfect Unity of Nature; however incomprehensible it may be to us. When therefore it is ask'd, who can conceive, who can believe such things? two things are join'd which should be very carefully distinguish'd. \* The conceiving fully, or perfectly comprehending the Mysteries, is no Part of our Faith; the believing them, is. Nor is there any Difficulty that we may and ought to believe many things which we cannot fully comprehend. We believe a God, we believe our Souls. We fully comprehend neither. After such Reflections as these, I would answer directly, that Trinity and Unity in one and the *same Respect*, is a Contradiction; but in *different Respects*, there is not even the Appearance of a Contradiction: And here the Unity is in respect of the *Nature*; the Trinity in the *Persons*. In regard to the *Incarnation*, if those Gentlemen would reflect upon the Union of their own Souls with their Bodies, a great part of their Difficulties would cease.

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\* Quomodo istud creditur? quomodo istud capitur? Ad hæc duo respondes. Quomodo capitur, recta dicis: quomodo creditur, non recte dicis; immò bene creditur quia non capitur: Nam si caperetur, non opus esset ut crederetur. Ideo credis quia non capis. *S. Aug. tr. 38. in Joannem.*

CRITOM. May be not. For there is an infinitely greater Distance between GOD and Man, than between a Body and a Spirit. It will not therefore follow, that because our Bodies and Souls can be united, the divine and human Nature can also be united.

EUDOX. We do by no Means pretend, that one can be absolutely inferr'd from the other; we only mean, that a due Consideration of one, may facilitate the Belief of the other. It is own'd there is an infinitely greater *Distance* between GOD and Man, than between a Body and a Spirit. But as to *Opposition*, properly speaking, there is none. Since therefore GOD could unite our Bodies and Souls, and this we believe without being able to comprehend it fully, nothing but meer arbitrary Stubborness can pretend there is any clear Impossibility of an Union, between the divine and human Nature. \*

CRITOM. Will it not follow, that an Union of the two Natures cannot be conceived without a *Confusion* of both? As the Result from the Mixture of different Liquors, is different from the Liquors unmixed, will not the Result from the Union of the divine and human Nature, be different from both?

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\* Demus aliquid Deum posse quod nos investigare non possumus. S. Aug.

EUDOX. Such Objections would soon be dropt, upon reflecting that Union, precisely taken, neither implies Mitxture, nor Confusion, nor Change in the Substances themselves. Of this we have a strong instance in ourselves. Our Bodies and Souls, tho' closely united, still keep their proper and distant Substances. Nor can any Reason be given for apprehending an Impossibility of Union between the divine and human Nature, or any Confusion resulting from their Union.

CRITOM. Still they will urge, that the Result from that Union will be both GOD and Man, Passible and Impassible; which appear to be plain Contradictions.

EUDOX. It has been already observed, that there is no Appearance of Contradiction where the Affirmation and Negation are in different Respects. In the Case before us, the Negation of Passibility regards the divine Nature; the Affirmation of it, regards the human Nature. And where is the Appearance of any Contradiction in affirming, that the Nature of Man is Mortal, the Nature of GOD Immortal. We are conscious to ourselves, that by the Union of our Bodies and Souls, we consist of a Mortal and Immortal Part, without any Contradiction. By such Instances as these I would



endeavour upon Occasions; to facilitate the Belief of our Myſteries. But ſtill I would frequently inculcate, that however I might be unable to clear all Difficulties, yet they are no leſs to be believed; becauſe grounded upon ſuch Proofs of divine Authority as cannot be queſtion'd. And moreover, I would urge, that the farther they exaggerate the Incomprehenſibleneſs of our Myſteries, the more they confirm the Certainty of the Grounds upon which the Belief of them has been eſtabliſh'd.

CRITOM. I know not whether I take your Meaning right in what you now ſaid. Am I right in taking it to be this? That the more difficult the Myſteries are, the more convincing muſt have been the Proofs that could bring the World to the Belief of them.

EUDOX. Yes, dear *Critomachus*, that is exactly my Meaning; and the Point well deſerves to be more fully conſider'd. *Deiſts* ſhould reflect, that however incredible they may pleaſe to call the Myſteries of Chriſtianity, yet they cannot deny but that they have been thought credible, and been actually believed by vaſt Numbers of the wiſeſt of Men in all Ages. Not only by ſome few, and in ſome obſcure Corners of the World, but every where, by whole Provinces

vinces and Kingdoms: Not by ignorant only and weak, but by the most solid and learned Men in the World: They were believed not by any Influence of Education in the first Ages, but by Men educated in very different Notions: They were believed by Men who must have been brought to it against all the Ties of Flesh and Blood, in Opposition to what they had been taught as the most sacred Truths, and by persuading them to abhor what they and their Friends adored till then, and to embrace what put them under the greatest temporal Disadvantages, and often obliged them to suffer the greatest Torments and most cruel Deaths. What could persuade such Mysteries, in such Circumstances, but the most plain divine Proofs? What less could induce them to believe Mysteries which humble and captivate Reason to Faith, and Mysteries join'd at the same time with other Truths that mortify all our Passions? Such Truths as are apparent to Reason, and no less agreeable to our Inclinations, or Truths which are at least either merely *Speculative*, or so indifferent as not to interfere with our Passions, may easily be persuaded. But Nature alone will engage Men in a close Inquiry, and most strict Examination of Proofs, before they will believe things hard

to be conceived, and others harder to be practiced. The Sum of the Case here, is this: The *Deist* says, our Myſteries are incredible, plain Fact avers that the World for above ſeventeen hundred Years has thought them credible, and has believed them with a firm and conſtant Faith, even to the crueſt Deaths, in millions of Perſons. The Fact is notorious: The Conſequence is evident; that the Belief of them muſt have proceeded from ſuch Proofs as were unconteſtable. Nothing but a divine Teſtimony could conquer ſuch Difficulties. Thus GOD order'd Faith, that the Firmneſs of it might be the more wonderful by the Difficulties of it. \*

CRITOM. Still they will urge, that as we are rational Creatures we muſt attend more to the Dictates of Reaſon, than to Appearance of things to our Senſes: That as Reaſon is our firſt Prerogative, it muſt not only take place of our Senſes, but even over-rule them when they lead us wrong, as they often do. Thus Reaſon convinces us, that a Stick, thruſt into the Water, is not crook'd, tho' it appears ſo to the Eye. And thus (will they ſay) whatever Miracles may

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\* Ut mirabilior fieret conſtantia fidei, ex difficultate credendi. S. Leo. Ser. de Paſs.

be supposed to strike our Senses, Reason must stop us from assenting to our Senses where she has convinced us before-hand of a Truth. Where Reason then has already assured us, that Three cannot be One, no Miracles, which are Appeals to our Senses, can be a solid Proof that Three are One.

EUDOX. Whatever can be said of this Kind, is meer *Sophism*. Reason is certainly our great Prerogative. But our Reason is not an infinite Prerogative. It has its Limits, and there it must stop. It has a superior Reason, and to that it must submit. GOD knows more of himself than we can, and may reveal more than we can discover by Discourse. Let us suppose *Deists* to have as good Eyes as any Men. Will not a *Telescope* help them to reach Objects they could not otherwise discover, or to see them more distinctly? In the like manner, let us suppose them (tho' their Arguments give little Reason for it) to have as great a Faculty of Reason as any Men, why may not Revelation discover Truths which were otherwise out of their Reach, or shew them more distinctly? When GOD is pleased to make such Discoveries, Reason tells us we must hearken, and believe. Reason, indeed, must over-rule our Senses as to some Appearances of things. But when Reason can



find no Misguidance in the Appearances of things, then even Reason confirms the Testimony of our Senses, and believes them. In such Cases, Miracles are not Appeals to our Senses only, but also to our Reason. It is own'd that Miracles would not (they could not possibly) move our Reason against an evident Truth which we had first fully comprehended. But where Reason must own she is not capable of a full Comprehension, she ought to submit to such external Proofs as GOD shall please to give us by Means of our Senses. When therefore in the present Case it is said, that Reason tells me Three cannot be One, this is only true if affirm'd of being Three and One in all respects. Nor can any Miracle make me believe, that what is One in all respects, is also Three in the same respects. But Reason does not evidently tell me, that what is One in *Nature*, cannot be Three in *Persons*. A Distinction of Persons in Unity of Nature is what Reason, indeed, does not evidently shew me to be true; but then it does not shew it to be false. It is a *Secret* to my Reason, but not *opposite* to my Reason. And since Reason convinces me there are many Secrets in GOD above my Comprehension, I must believe this of Unity and Trinity, if I find that GOD himself

himself attests it. In a Word: We must carefully distinguish between *direct* Reason, and *reflex* Reason. Direct Reason is what considers Objects in themselves immediately. Reflex Reason judges of them, not as they are immediately in themselves (for as they are in themselves, they are often above our Reach) but determines herself by the Testimony of others. How far soever our direct Reason may be from comprehending the Mystery of the most BLESSED TRINITY, yet our reflex Reason fully sees, that GOD has given such Tokens of his testifying the Truth of it, as can leave no reasonable Doubt; and I evidently know, that what he so attests, must be true, however incomprehensible to me, and that I am obliged to believe it.

CRITOM. By this Rule and Method of reasoning, it readily appears, the Disputes about Christianity would soon be brought to a very compendious Issue. But thus Faith would be very *implicit*. And certainly you know what Jest not only *Deists*, but even several *Christians* often make upon *implicit Faith*.

EUDOX. It is not my Business, here with you, to inquire how far any *Christians*, in their particular Disputes, have either misunderstood or misrepresented the Notion

of *implicit Faith*. The Rule I have been mentioning may be liable to Jests, and what is out of the Reach of some Mens Jests, but it can never be reasonably rejected. And the more compendious it is, the more it ought to be follow'd. Descending to Particulars is an infinite Work, and our Inquiries would never end. No Religion, whether meerly natural or reveal'd, would ever be embraced, if none were to be admitted till all Particulars were first discuss'd. Religion therefore, of whatever Kind, must be brought to some Rule which may end the Inquiry. Such a Rule is that we have been considering.

CRITOM. Upon the whole then, the Consequence must be, that as we cannot come to any Conclusion by Discourse, without some fixt Principle, so we can come to no Determination about Religion, but by some first Rule; and such a Rule as must bring us to a final Choice, without entring into Particulars which are endless.

EUDOX. Nothing is more evident. Nor shall I make any Excuse for insisting upon it so often, and in so many different Ways, since it is so very important. I will therefore add these farther Reflections upon it. The *Gentleman* who, as I told you in our first Conference on these Matters, was sent

to me upon the same account as you are pleased to come to me now, own'd, that Christianity in many respects was a very plausible Scheme, that even in the Mysteries there was something very comfortable in the Idea of a REDEEMER, in whose Mysteries we might confide. But then he added, that the Mysteries were such, when they came to be closely examined, that one was more inclined to *wish*, than to *believe* them True. In short, that he knew not how to believe what neither he could conceive, nor any one could prove. You will easily imagine I replied, that if he meant proving them by direct Reasons drawn from the immediate Consideration of the Mysteries themselves, it was not pretended we could fully do it, nor could it reasonably be demanded. I added, that he put me in mind of what is related of an antient Philosopher who, upon reading the Books of *Moses*, said, he speaks fine Things if he did but prove them. Some attribute it to *Aristotle*; but I cannot think he would be guilty of a Saying so grossly *unphilosophical*. For he that affirms, that the things he delivers are from GOD, is not obliged to prove the things themselves by philosophical Arguments. All he is obliged to prove is, that GOD has attested them. This *Moses* did,



did, this we do by Miracles which can admit of no reasonable Doubt. No farther Proof can be justly demanded. Congruous Reasons and Explications may be given, and help to fix the Waverings of our imperfect Reason; but what such Explications want of giving full Satisfaction, must be finally had from those other Proofs. Where these Proofs make it sufficiently clear, that the Revelation is from God, no uncertain Reasons, no not even such as might perhaps have otherwise seem'd evident, ought to make us doubt. For where on one side God is pleas'd to speak by such Signs as neither the Learned, nor Unlearned can reasonably question, and on the other, only obscure Notions puzzle our Reason, it would be unreasonable not to force our Understanding to submit; since we know, and have so often experienced, that we have been mistaken in things which at first seem'd evident; especially in things *Sublime* or deep of their own Nature: Whereas a great Number of *Facts* concurring to prove the Revelation, are of their own Nature judg'd of more easily and universally, than *abstract* Reasons, and a Train of Consequences in strict philosophical Demonstrations. Nor is any Demonstration more evident than the general Capacity of Men to  
 judge

judge upon such Facts, more easily than to determine upon philosophical and abstract Reasonings.

CRITOM. By this Rule then, the Discussion of particular Articles of Christianity cannot be justly insisted on by a serious Inquirer into Religion, but he must be reduced to the general Proofs. For if one Point must be examined in particular, why not another that is equally difficult, or equally necessary? If another, where shall we stop? All cannot be discussed. Consequently, whoever would inform another, or would satisfy himself about Religion, must bring the matter to a general Proof which includes all, or comprises a Proof of all Particulars. This, I know, is the Method of *Catholicks* in reducing those who are separated from them to the Point of the Church's Authority in deciding Controversies. But those who dissent from you, do not fix upon any such general Rule of determining Disputes. They do, as far as I can perceive, refer us to an Examination of Particulars. And you yourself, *Eudoxus*, enter'd into Particulars, of the Immortality of the Soul, for Example. Do you then think that *Deists* have a Right to insist upon that Article being first settled, before they proceed any farther? If the Soul dies with  
the

the Body, it will be very natural for them to supersede any troublesome Inquiry about Religion. Yet I cannot see why, if that must, many others, or even all others, must not be discussed by their immediate Grounds.

EUDOX. You certainly conclude very right. There would be no end of all particular Discussions. They cannot therefore be properly requisite. As far as those, who dissent from us, run into a wrong Method of referring to the Examination of Particulars, it is their Business to see whether they can answer the Inconveniences of it. For my own part, if I have insisted upon some Particulars, it was in such a way only as they occasionally fell into our Discourse; only to soften, or remove for the present, some obvious Prejudices, till we came to the general Proof of the whole Christian System: And not that I any way think, particular Articles are to be examined upon their own peculiar Grounds, before a serious Inquirer can be brought to a Determination about reveal'd Religion upon general Proofs. As to the Immortality of the Soul (and the like holds in other Points) prescinding from that Question, either there is a Religion which has the certain Marks of being a divine Revelation, or there is not. If not,  
you

you will not be obliged to embrace it, even supposing the Soul's Immortality to be demonstrated by natural Reason: If there is a Religion that has such Marks, you will be obliged to embrace it, whether you have or have not any natural Demonstrations of the Immortality of the Soul. The great Point therefore is this (and it cannot be too much inculcated) whether there is a Religion which GOD has attested with such Marks. This Point being settled, all others are settled of Course; all are to be equally received, whether they have or have not any particular Demonstrations from Reason. For it is evidently more reasonable I should submit to GOD, speaking so clearly, than that I should refuse to submit, till he gives me demonstrative Reasons for each Article he is pleased to reveal.

CRITOM. I must own, that as to Religion it seems plain, that the Rule you mention must be taken by every serious Inquirer. As I am so, I will not fail to bring my Mind off from that wrong Method, which *Deists* commonly take, of stifling the Evidence of general Proofs by running into Doubts upon particular Articles.

EUDOX. You will be farther confirm'd in this Resolution, by reflecting that even a  
*Deist,*



*Deist*, if he will act consequently, must take the Method I have been insisting upon, against *Atheists*. Thus for Example, when an *Atheist* pretends it is no less inconceivable how an infinite wise and benevolent Being, can suffer such numberless Disorders as are manifest in the World, than it is to conceive how one undivided Nature can be in three distinct Persons; and that he is as well grounded in denying the Existence of GOD and *Providence*, as the *Deist* in denying a *Trinity* in the divine Nature; what will a *Deist* say? Perhaps he will not use a Saying of St. *Austin* (tho' so wise a Christian) while so fond of often using the Words of *Pagans* incomparably less wise. Yet, if he will answer the *Atheist* seriously, he must say in the Sense of St. *Austin*, that the Secrets of GOD should inspire us with a Spirit of Respect and *Attention*, and not with a Spirit of *Opposition*: \* That this is an important Maxim, not of Christianity only, but of Reason: That Reason shews us nothing more plainly than her own Weakness: That the more we know, the more we see numberless things in Nature that are above our Comprehension: That consequently tho' we

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\* Secretum Dei intentos nos habere debet, non ad-  
versos. S. *Aug.*

are not able to account for several things that happen in the World, this ought not to make us doubt of their Existence: That by the same Reason we ought not to doubt of the Existence of a God, because we know not all the Secrets of his Nature and Providence: That the same Reason which tells us there is a first and supreme Being, does also tell us, that Being is an *Abyss* of Wisdom; and that it is a Folly to think of fathoming such an *Abyss* with the short Line of our Reason: That in such Cases therefore as are above my Reach, Reason directs me, not to *deny*, but to *adore* the Secrets of his Wisdom. † Evident Proofs demonstrate there is a God. All the wisest Men of all Ages, however they may have disagreed in other things, have agreed in this. The Difficulty of reconciling some things in the World with the divine Attributes, in which Reconciliation some may disagree, cannot reasonably make me doubt of that wherein they agree as in an evident Principle. Must I doubt whether there are any material Bodies in the World, because I cannot fully answer all the Difficulties which

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† Possum rationabiliter, & satis constanter dicere, nescio secretum, & consilium divinitatis ignoro. *Sabo. de Gub. Dei.* l. 3.

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Philosophers raise about divisible or indivisible Parts of Bodies? There are such Difficulties on either Side, as no Wit of Man has ever yet been able to resolve. Thus *Deists* would say to an *Atheist*. Let them but say thus to themselves, and they will soon cease to reject Christianity because the Mysteries of it are beyond their full Comprehension. Clear Proofs convince any reasonable Man that duly considers them, that it is a divine Revelation. And this being proved, there needs no more to conclude it is a Folly to doubt of the Truth of the particular Articles.

CRITOM. It is very plain from what you have been saying, the *Deists* must themselves, in answering the Objections of *Atheists*, confute their own Objections against Christianity from the Difficulty of comprehending its Mysteries. What you have here said, and in our former discoursing on the Subject of reveal'd Religion, in shewing the *Atheistical* Tendency of most Arguments used by *Deists*, has been of great use to me. Inconsistency is the natural Effect of Error. Only Truth is consistent with itself.

EUDOX. You cannot but think, dear *Critomachus*, that it gives me a singular Pleasure to find you so seriously, and so candidly

candidly observing, not only the most direct, but also such incident Remarks as are of Moment to settle a wavering Mind, and recover it from Error. It is a great Sign that the main Question will be resolved into a full Conviction, by positing with the same Candor, some others which still remain. Among these, I would earnestly desire you, often to consider in your private Thoughts, the moral Doctrines of Christianity. They are such, that even *Deists* generally own (nor indeed can it be denied) that the World would be happy if they were exactly observed. Whatever the Professors of that Law may be, the moral Prints of the *Gospel* are irreproachable. There is nothing in them but what is worthy of GOD. If the *Deists* will not say in the full meaning of an Expression of St. *Ambrose*, that a Life which comes up to the Laws of the *Gospel* is a Proof of the Divinity of the Religion itself, \* they must own that in such a Life there would be nothing, but what, as I said, would be worthy of GOD.

CRITOM. I have indeed scarce ever heard *Deists* object against the moral Precepts of the *Gospel*, excepting some downright shameless *Libertines*, who deserve the

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\* Testimonium divinitatis vita Christiani. S. *Ambr.*  
Punishment



Punishment of the Government, rather than any other Answer. Yet those who would be thought sober and rational *Deists*, as much as they seem ready to own, and even to admire the moral Doctrines of *Christianity*, the more free they make with the Mysteries; pretending that these are as much contrary, as those are conformable to Reason.

EUDOX. We own, as readily as they please, that the Mysteries are incomprehensible to meer Reason. But we deny they are contrary to it. The seeming Contradictions have been often abundantly answer'd. Nor is it here the Place to particularize farther upon them. What I would here observe is, that while *Deists* consider the Difficulties of our Mysteries, if they would on the other hand, consider the Tendency of those Mysteries to inspire the greatest Virtues and most sublime Sanctity, they would by pondering this Tendency be more inclined to believe them, than be withdrawn from believing them by their being incomprehensible. Take for Example, the Mystery of the *Incarnation*. While on one hand it surpasses our Comprehension, on the other it inspires the sublimest Principles and Motives of Sanctity. Obscure in itself, it diffuses through the Soul most admirable

admirable Lights, and Sentiments. For upon believing it, nothing is more evident than these Consequences: That our Sanctification and Salvation is the most important of all Affairs, since the Importance of it made GOD descend from Heaven; that since GOD did so much towards those Ends, we ought to spare no Pains to attain them; that we ought to follow his Doctrine and Example, who came from Heaven to teach us the way thither, more by his Example, than by his Words; that independently of our Interest, *Gratitude* alone should fix our Hearts on GOD who has loved us so much, &c. Thus the greatest Mysteries of our Faith will appear no less practical than Sublime; and their Tendancy to inspire Virtue, Sanctity, a Detestation and Flight of Sin, and a most ardent Love of GOD, will facilitate the Belief of the Mysteries themselves. A Religion whereof the Mysteries thus conspire with the moral Doctrines to the greatest Sanctity, whence can it come but from GOD, the Author of Sanctity? Is there not all the Reason in the World, to acquiesce in the Truth of that Religion, in which every thing thus conspires to the most eminent Sanctity? I may justly be confounded that I live not up to it, but I can never reasonably doubt of its Truth.

CRITOM. This Method of considering the Myſteries as they may influence Morality, and not only as they puzzle the Underſtanding, is very reaſonable. I am very ſenſible that the Diſpoſition of the Heart has a great Influence on the Underſtanding. It certainly at leaſt has in this Regard, that we are apt to dwell almoſt only on ſuch Conſiderations as moſt ſuit our Inclinations. We turn our Minds, and fix them on thoſe Views which pleaſe moſt, and are loath to ſee things in ſuch other Views as muſt engage us to a troubleſome Change of Principles or Actions. And I am perſuaded, that thoſe *Deiſts* who ſeem to have a Fund of moral Principles, by accuſtoming themſelves to conſider Chriſtianity as fully on other Sides, as they do on that of the Difficulty of its Myſteries, would, as you ſaid, ſoon find a greater Diſpoſition to embrace it.

EUDOX. This is what I never doubted of as to ſuch as have become *Deiſts* rather by an unfortunate Neglect of Education, than by Immorality. There is a greater Difficulty on many accounts in bringing others back to Chriſtianity, who never had any Doubts in their Underſtanding, till Vice had tainted their Hearts. And how many never began to queſtion the Myſtery of the *Incarnation*, till they grew unwilling  
to

to comply with the Duties of a Christian? They first began to be averse to the Maxims of the *Cross*, before they began to doubt of the Possibility of GOD becoming Incarnate. It was not the Difficulty of the Mystery, but their indulged Passions that made them pretend to find Contradictions in it. They saw the Consequence of believing the Mystery; the Consequence of it, is the Obligation of believing all the other Parts of Christian Religion upon the same Authority; and among those other Parts, there are many contrary to their vicious Inclinations and Habits. Few would doubt of a crucified GOD, if that GOD laid no Restraints on their Inclinations and Passions.

CRITOM. One may be confirm'd in this Reflection by observing that generally ---- But I see the Coach of *Eunomius* coming this way. Do you expect him here?

EUDOX. I thought he would have been with me yesterday, about his Concerns with *Cleander*.

CRITOM. Adieu then till *Wednesday*.







DEISM  
AND  
CHRISTIANITY  
FAIRLY CONSIDER'D, &c.

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DIALOGUE IV.  
BETWEEN  
*EUDOXUS* and *CRITOMACHUS*.

*EUDOXUS*.



WELCOME, dear *Critomachus*. The more I observe your Earnestness in the Inquiry you have enter'd upon, the more I was concern'd at being obliged to send you Word to delay your Visit till to-day. But the Occasion was  
such

such an Affair as could not be either avoided, or put off.

CRITOM. You judge right of my Earnestness in the Matter. And I find it increase the more I advance towards a Determination. Upon reviving in my private Thoughts, what was said in our last meeting concerning the Obscurity of the Christian Mysteries, I am very much persuaded it cannot be a just Reason to disbelieve them. Nay, the Reflection I was going to mention, when the coming of *Eunomius* broke off our Discourse, convinces me there is little more than a meer Pretence in what *Deists* commonly allege of their finding the Mysteries of Christianity are incredible. The Reflection I mean, is this: We find *Deists* generally believe other things of GOD that are such as the Wit of Man can no more fully comprehend, than the Mystery of the *Trinity*. For instance: They believe the *Immutability* and *Liberty* of GOD. The Notion of *Liberty* implies, that the Agent is not necessarily determined to either Side. *Immutability* seems no less to imply, that the Agent is necessarily determined. How difficult is it to comprehend that these can be consistent in the same Being? Why then is this so generally believed by *Deists*, while they pretend, that the *Trinity* is incredible? Can any Reason be given but that the Li-

erty and Immutability of GOD do not appear to them to have an immediate Consequence upon the Conduct of their Lives; while the Mystery of the *Trinity*, if believed, must make them immediately infer an Obligation to alter their Conduct? The Heart and Will do therefore balance in the Case of admitting the Trinity; while in the Case of GOD's Liberty and Immutability, they do not; tho' the Difficulties are in reality incomprehensible in both Cases.

EUDOX. Your Reflection is very just, and it puts me in mind of applying a Reflection of *Tertullian* on the *Pagans* chusing such Gods as they pleased. \* He exposes the Absurdity in a concise Expression, after his Manner: *If the God does not please Man, he shall be no God.* It seems as if modern Infidels laid it also down for one of their Principles, that, *If GOD reveals any thing that does not please us, it shall not be a divine Revelation.* Let the strongest Proofs be given that the Revelation is from him, they refuse to believe it; and their Disbelief comes to this when it is fairly explain'd; these things do not please us, and therefore they shall not be true. While they would be retrenching themselves under the Darkeness of Christian Mysteries, and

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\* Nisi homini Deus placuerit, Deus non erit. *Tertul.*  
saying,

saying, they are incomprehensible and incredible, they are themselves in a manner incomprehensibly, incredulous. For it is really in a manner incomprehensible, that Men pretending to Reason should refuse to believe such things as have the strongest Motives of Credibility. Especially while they believe other things that are incomprehensible to our meer Reason.

CRITOM. It frequently happens in Affairs of Life, that Men are easily persuaded to what they love, while they are stubborn to the strongest Arguments for things they dislike. It is therefore less wonder it should happen thus in regard to the Affairs of another Life. But the more we are sensible of an unhappy Bent in dwelling upon what favours our Liberty and Liking, and passing slightly over such Considerations as may favour reveal'd Religion, the more we should endeavour to bring ourselves to an impartial Examination. And therefore, whatever Darkn<sup>e</sup>s Christianity may seem to be under by its Mysteries, we should seriously see if it will not shine with greater Brightness in another View, by the Strength of its external Proofs, and by the great Ideas and Motives of Virtue included both in its moral Doctrines, and its Mysteries. Some curious Pictures in one Point of View shew not



the Beauty of their Colours, nor the Exactness of Proportions. If in another View they have these Characters, we admire the Work, and much more the *Artist*. It is our Duty then, to see how far something of this sort may happen in different Views of reveal'd Religion.

EUDOX. In Effect, thus taken in its proper View, how admirable will it appear? I cannot but think you will be much pleased, in this Respect particularly, with the Letters I mention'd to you of the Great Archbishop of *Cambray*. Especially as it is his Talent to speak with no less Strength to the Heart, than to the Understanding. Even in the Preface to them, tho' made by another Hand, yet finely suited to the Work, how justly is it said: That the Existence of a Being infinitely Perfect, a happy Immortality in Contemplation of his Grandeur, a Worship that consists in the Love of him that is infinitely amiable, are Ideas so noble, so full of Comfort, that one could not but wish they were true, even supposing we could not demonstrate their Truth: That upon a full Persuasion of reveal'd Religion, we should be convinced that all things in the World are unworthy to be the Term of our Love; we should receive all the Miseries of this Life with Resignation to the Will of God,  
either

either as Remedies against our Passions, or Preparatives to an infinite Happiness hereafter; we should look upon all the Advantages we have in this World, as Means given us to make others happy, by our imitating the communicative Goodness of God; we should love others as our Brothers, destined to the same Happiness, as we all came from the same *Origin*. How happy would the World be, if duly influenced by these, and the other Notions of Christianity? But alas! I must add with St. *Ambrose*, the Hearts of the Wicked are too narrow to receive the great and sublime Truths of our Faith. \*

CRITOM. It will be here objected by *Deists*, that all the moral Doctrines of Christianity being conformable to Reason, it cannot have the Advantage over meer natural Religion in Point of *Morality*; since in the Religion of Nature they include all Morality. Then they will tell you what a fine Scheme of natural Religion has been *delineated* of late Years, independently of Revelation.

EUDOX. I will not inquire here what might be justly censured in the Book they mean of *the Religion of Nature delineated*. Let us rather allow them to suppose the

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\* Non capiunt fidei magnitudinem angusta impiorum, pectora. S. *Ambr.* l. 3. de sp. S. cap. 18.

Morality of it to be very fine. Yet they must own it is plain enough the Author would not have carried it so far, if he had not been help'd in the drawing it out, by the Lights he had received from the Christian Revelation. Supposing again, that the Religion of Nature does, in their meaning, include all Morality, as Christianity does; yet it is very evident, that Christianity has vastly the Advantage in many respects. For Example, first, affording sublimer Motives, and stronger Incitements to Morality from the Ideas of Gratitude and Love to GOD, whom it teaches to have done and suffer'd so much for Love of us. Second, By ascertaining in a far stronger manner, the Greatness of future Punishments and Rewards; which are so great Supports of Morality. Third, In establishing Morality upon a Ground that makes it universal. For all see the Obligation of observing such moral Precepts as are taught by a divine Authority: Whereas few are capable of carrying a Scheme of Morals to any great Height, by meer force of abstract Reasonings. Precepts of Morality, enjoin'd by uncontestable Authority, must be a more *uniform* and *universal* Rule for human Conduct, than as they are deducible from meer Reasoning. For as Mens Capacities differ, so will their Deductions in Reasoning.

CRITOM.

CRITOM. There is no need of your enlarging here to me, upon the Advantages of Christianity above all the Schemes of Morality that have ever been drawn or delineated by the Wit of Men; they are abundantly visible. All I have to do is frequently to consider the Points we have been discoursing upon. It is in our Minds, as in the Sea; a rolling of the Waves will continue a while, even after the great Wind that raised them, is fallen. Thus in the Mind a sort of wavering continues, even after the Prejudices it was under are much abated, or in a manner allay'd. Nor do I doubt but the Calm of entire Determination will soon ensue, by bending my Thoughts to a due pondering the Motives to believe the Christian Revelation.

EUDOX. Nothing can be a greater Proof of your good Sense, and your Sincerity, than this Resolution of frequently considering the Proofs of Christianity in different ways. It is but just, that one who has long pursued various ways of wandering from the Truth, should at length, upon a Desire of finding it, seek it fairly in all those ways that may represent it in the strongest Light.

CRITOM. In this sincere Design, I wish you would help me to recollect a Method of representing to my Mind the Proofs of Christianity, of which I have now but a faint



Remembrance, tho' it struck me pretty much when I first heard it. An ingenious Gentleman, of my Acquaintance, some Years since, mention'd a Supposition of a Conversation of *St. Peter* with *Seneca*, wherein the Apostle declared to that Philosopher his Design of establishing a New Religion, and fixing his own Seat and Authority in that Imperial City; with a Power far more extended than the *Roman* Eagles had ever been carried. I remember he told us, that as he was a *Catholick*, he hoped we would excuse him, if in managing the Argument he was going to propose, something should slip from him in the Turn of it, that might favour what we should call *Popery*: But that he design'd no more in his present urging the Supposition, than to place the general Proofs of Christianity in a clear Light. We promised to overlook the *Papist*, and only consider the *Christian* in his intended Method. He then proceeded to explain the supposed Conference between *St. Peter* and *Seneca*, in a way which seem'd to me very Natural and Strong, tho' I was then pretty much warp'd towards *Deism*. I remember he told us, he had the Thought from an *Italian* Author. Perhaps you can tell me the Author's Name, which I have forgot, and the Particulars of the Argument, of which I have only a confused Remembrance.

EUDOX.

EUDOX. Among the Holy Fathers there are Hints of such a Supposition as you mean: And I believe the *Italian* Author is one *Segneri*, in a Book intitl'd *l'Incredulo Senza scusa*. \*

CRITOM. The very same. I now perfectly recollect the Name of the Author, and the Title of the Book.

EUDOX. Some while after I had restor'd that *Italian* Book which I had borrow'd from *Theodolus*, reflecting on that Supposition in it, with which I was much struck at the very first reading, I began to recollect it over again in my Thoughts. And to amuse myself in a declining Fit of the *Gout*, I drew up the Argument after my own Manner, in these Papers, which if you will please to take the Pains to peruse; I will, in the mean while, take the Liberty of a Friend in writing a Letter, lest I may otherwise be hinder'd from having it ready for the Post.

CRITOM. I shall be very glad to read the Argument drawn up in your Method; nor do you need any Excuse for writing in the mean while.

EUDOX. You may over-look, if you please, for the present, what is said at the End, of *Catholick* Religion in Particular,

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\* *Parte Seconda. cap. 9. n. 15. & 16.*

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and only mind now what is said of Christian Religion in general.



*Christianity Proved in a supposed Conference between St. PETER and SENECA.*

THERE are Letters still extant, said to have pass'd between St. *Paul* and *Seneca*, which even in St. *Hierom's* time were taken by several to be Genuine. Without inquiring whether they are really so, or not, we may be allow'd to suppose at least, that *Seneca* may have had some Conference with St. *Peter* or St. *Paul*, at their coming to *Rome*. As St. *Peter* fixt his Seat there, I will rather frame the *Hypothesis* of a Conference with him.

In the second Year of *Claudius* the Emperor, when *Rome* was no less eminent in Learning than in Majestic Grandeur and Power; St. *Peter* came to settle there the Empire of *CHRIST*, by the seeming Folly and astonishing Humility of the Cross. At his coming to that glorious City, it may very naturally be imagined that some great and learned Man, *Seneca* for Example, upon remarking the Gravity and Modesty of  
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of the *Apostle* in a foreign Dress, might inquire whence he came, on what Design, what *Seat* of *Philosophers* he follow'd, or what might be his particular Opinions, and what their Grounds.

The Conversation we may no less naturally imagine to have follow'd upon these Inquiries, may be managed in several different ways. In the following Manner it will place a strong Proof of Christianity in a very clear Light, by considering *St. Peter* answering *Seneca* to this Effect.

A *Galilean* by Birth, and a Fisherman by Trade, I am come to *Rome* upon a Design no less noble and great, than my former Profession and Birth was mean. I come not to view the Greatness of *Rome*, tho' *Rome* has fill'd the World with Wonder; but to subdue *Rome*, tho' *Rome* has subdued the World. The Curiosity of beholding its Grandeur and Majesty moved me not; nor shall the Terror of its Power fright me from this grand Design.

Tho' a poor ignorant Fisherman, I am made Preacher of the only true God, and constituted his supreme *Vicar* upon Earth. I am therefore sent by him to place my Seat at *Rome*, where now is seated the Emperor of the World. Thus shall *Rome*, by the Power of God, in whose Name I come, from the Mistress of Error become the  
Disciple



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Disciple of Truth ; and from the Centre of all false Religions, become the Centre of true Faith. \* “ Raised to the Glory of  
 “ being God’s holy and chosen People,  
 “ and no less a Priestly than Imperial City,  
 “ made by the holy Seat of a Fisherman, a  
 “ more happy Head of the World than  
 “ she has hitherto been, she shall bear a  
 “ larger Sway by this divine Religion I  
 “ am to Preach, than now by all her hu-  
 “ man Power. For tho’ she has spread her  
 “ Conquests to so vast Extents both by Sea  
 “ and Land, yet less is all that she has  
 “ hitherto subdued by force of Arms, than  
 “ what will be brought to her Obedience  
 “ by the Peace of this New Religion which  
 “ I shall here establish. In order to this  
 “ great Work, Providence has admirably  
 “ united so many different Countries under  
 “ one Empire, that the preaching of this  
 “ Faith might be more easily propagated  
 “ to People under the Government of one  
 “ City. This City, hitherto ignorant of the  
 “ Author of her Greatness, while she com-  
 “ mands over almost all Nations, is en-  
 “ flaved to almost all the different Errors  
 “ of her subject Nations ; and thinks she  
 “ is the most religious of them all, because

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\* N. B. The Expressions here *Comma’d*, are from St. *Leo*, almost Word for Word.

“ she

“ she embraces the Superstitions of them  
 “ all. And therefore, the more she is en-  
 “ gaged in such numbers of Falsities, the  
 “ more admirable will be her Deliverance  
 “ by the true Faith which I am come to  
 “ preach.”

Speaking of this Faith, one of my Fellow-Preachers will soon write to *Rome* with Thanks to Heaven, that her Faith is celebrated throughout the World. † And I myself, writing to the Elect of *Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, Bithynia*, and my Successors writing to innumerable other Nations, shall bleis God the Father of our Lord *JESUS CHRIST*, who according to his great Mercy has regenerated us to a lively Hope by the Resurrection of *CHRIST*, of an incorruptible, uncontamitated, and never fading Inheritance, conserved for us in Heaven.\*

At this Discourse of *St. Peter*, we may well imagine *Seneca* would be highly astonish'd, and perhaps doubt at first, whether he should take it for Extravagant, or for Sublime. For tho' spoken with an Air that portended something more than Human, yet it might also seem incredible: However, that it deserved a farther Inquiry what Faith he pretended to preach, who he

† *Ad Romanos. Cap. 1. v. 8.*

\* *Ep. 1. Petri. 1.*  
 meant

meant by *CHRIST*, what were the Articles, and what the Grounds of his Religion.

The Apostle's Reply may be supposed again to have been: That *CHRIST* is the Eternal and *Consubstantial* Son of GOD; himself both true GOD and true MAN: That in his Name every Knee shall bend in Heaven, Earth, and Hell: That his Faith is that Victory that shall conquer the World, and make all believe in *CHRIST*, who uniting the divine and human Nature in one Person, and suffering in his human Nature to expiate the Sins of the World, was crucified, and put to death by the *Roman* President *Pontius Pilate*: That his Religion is Sublime in its Mysteries, hard in its Morals, full of the Ignominy of the Cross, which is a Scandal to the *Jews*, and a Folly to *Gentiles*. This is the Religion I am come to preach; and the Design of my coming is to subject the *Roman* Empire to the Empire of *CHRIST*, and to his Cross.

Here again it is obvious to suppose, that the *Philosopher* viewing the *Apostle* with new Attention and Astonishment, ask'd him, how he could imagine so strange a Religion would prevail in *Rome*, where every thing was full of Vanity and Vice, and where even a small Degree of moral  
Virtue

Virtue was grown a Wonder? Are these likely Dispositions to admit of a crucified God, and a crucified Life? And then too, under your modest and unassuming Air, how can you entertain no less a Design than of ruling the World? You have heard, I perceive, of the Majesty of *Rome*. But perhaps a View of its Buildings, its *Amphitheaters* and *Temples* will give you a more just Notion of Matters, and quell your aspiring Thoughts. When moreover you reflect upon our powerful and experienced Armies, our great Generals, and immense Treasures, you will have a better Idea of our Security from your Pretensions of a Conquest. What Armies equal to your Design, what Troops will you find to oppose ours? Where is your Policy in thus discovering your Design, when the very mention of it may make you be cast into Prison, at least, there to repent the Vanity of your Project.

There is nothing of *Policy* in thus opening my Design at present, nor will there be in my future Conduct. How little heavy Chains, and the strongest Prisons are able to confine me, I already know by Experience. Chains have already dropt from these Hands, and the Iron Gate of a Prison flown open to me by an invisible Power. \*

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\* *Acts* Chap xii.



I shall oppose to your Armies only a few weak and armless Men. With these I will attack the World and conquer it; and with them arm'd with no other Weapons but Words and Miracles. Nor shall your victorious *Legions* be a Terror to us, or a Security to you against our Design.

Is it then with subtle Philosophers, and with eloquent Orators you will manage it, and bring it to bear? The Sharpness of your *Syllogisms*, or the Sweetness of your Rhetorick will either force, or charm us into Conviction. But perhaps you do not reflect, that *Rome* excels no less in Learning, than in Arms. It abounds with learned Men. Who will you find to oppose to them?

I will oppose to them ignorant and illiterate Men. Men who scarce know the Name of an *Academy*. Men neither eloquent, nor learned.

Then sure their Proposals must be different from what you have mention'd. They must be as evident as first Principles, and their Doctrine must be so easy to conceive, so clear to the Understanding, that bare proposing will be convincing.

Far from it. It is true, the Religion we shall preach will be conformable to true Reason, but yet Sublime, hard to conceive, above the natural Reach of human Understanding,

Understanding, and full of incomprehensible Mysteries.

Certainly at least, while you preach such strange Doctrines, you will open a way to our sensual Appetites, that what you cannot persuade to our Understandings, you may recommend to our Passions. Sweet and flattering Promises will, I suppose, be offer'd instead of Arguments. In a Word, the less you will give to Reason and Demonstration, the more you will allow to Sensuality, and permit all manner of Licentiousness and Pleasures.

On the contrary, we shall teach Men the most hard and austere Life. Poverty, Chastity, Temperance, Fasting, Praying, denying yourself, carrying the Cross, even a Love of Sufferings and Injuries, will be our continual Speech.

But perhaps the Sweetness of Honour will temper the Hardships of those mighty Rigors; or the Hopes of Reputation and Praise will make the Followers of *CHRIST* embrace the Cross, as it has made some Philosophers contemn Riches and Pleasures.

Nothing less. We shall teach the Contempt of Honour and Praise, and require not any vain Show, but a real Neglect of Glory. It will be a capital Point of our Doctrine, that Actions, otherwise the most *Heroical*, and the greatest Rigors, will be unprofitable,

unprofitable, and even criminal, if tainted with Vanity and Ostentation. To be abject, vile, despicable both in their own and other People's Opinion, to prefer Contempt to Honour, Ignominy to Glory, will be a great Point of our Doctrine, as it was of the Instruction and Examples left us by our Master.

If I have hitherto been mistaken in my Conjectures of the Means by which you pretend to compass your Designs, it remains that your Sect must increase (if ever it does) by an *unobserved* and *silent* Growth.

This your last Conjecture is no less remote from the Point, than your former. We shall establish a Religion whereof the Profession will be made a Crime. No Religion was so harmless to Particulars, or to whole States: Yet none will be so cruelly persecuted as this will be. *Christians* (for so we are call'd) shall for many Years have frequently before their Eyes, Tortures, Fires, Deaths of the cruelest Kinds. Cruelty shall be Ingenious to invent new Torments for them. Thousands of different sorts of Punishments and Deaths will be their Lot. Millions of all Sexes and Ages, shall sign their Faith with their Blood (and I myself shall be one of the Number) and propagate it by their Death. Its greatest Persecutors shall wonder to see  
Christian

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Christian Religion fill the whole World, while the whole World shall conspire against it; and that it multiplies by the Sword, increases by Oppression, and gains greater Strength by the Death of its Followers. Criminals, tho' some in rare Cases prove obstinate, yet generally when put to the Torture, own their Crimes. Even the Innocent, by force of Torments, confess Crimes they never knew, tho' they knew their Confession would prove their Death. But among *Christians* there shall be thousands and thousands who shall suffer the greatest Torments, not only without owning any Crime, not only with invincible Patience, but even with Joy, for *CHRIST* crucified, to maintain his Divinity, and that all other pretended *Deities* are *Devils*, or reprobate Wretches. The Torments of *Christians* shall be publick to give Aversion, and instead of Aversion they shall give more Zeal to embrace the Faith for which such vast Numbers shall die. Their suffering with the greatest Courage, shall be no less persuasive Arguments than their Miracles. Nor shall the Sanctity of their Lives be less admirable, than their Constancy in the cruelest Torments. And tho' several will from time to time swerve from the Observance of their Duty, yet the greatest Virtues will shine so manifestly in great Numbers as to make it appear



appear, that no other Religion has so perfect a System of Virtue. This Religion, placing the Love of GOD for the first of its Principles, and the Love of others for its second, will teach Men to regulate all their Actions by these great Principles, so as to despise all that is not referred to GOD, and avoid all that is injurious to others, tho' but in Thought only. This is, in short, the Virtue *CHRIST* has taught; and you easily see of how vast an Extent it is in particular Occasions. This is what we are to preach and establish: This we shall establish over the World, by the greatest and most numerous Miracles that were ever heard: Such as curing the Blind, and the Lame, and even raising the Dead: Such as speaking all Languages, and many other Prodigies. Many such Miracles I myself have been empower'd to work, and have already wrought. So that People have brought sick Persons and placed them in the Streets, that when I came, the Shadow of my Body at least, might pass over them, and so they might be cured of their Infirmities. \* This miraculous Power *CHRIST* promised and has given us, and we know he will effect all I have told you, by his Omnipotent Power.

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\* *Acts* Cap.

Methinks at this I hear *Seneca* cry out: If *CHRIST* does bring to pass such strange Prodigies, he must be own'd to be greater than *Jupiter* and all the *Roman* Gods: If he propagates so strange a Religion by Means so strange, he cannot in Reason be refused our Adoration and our Belief: Whatever Difficulties may rise in our Understanding, upon the Mysteries of his Religion, must be all pass'd over with Submission, upon the Conviction of his *Divinity*, from such a wonderful Propagation of his Religion. Effects produced by Causes that have not the natural Force to produce them, are a certain Argument of divine Power. Especially when Effects are produced by Causes that are naturally opposite to such Effects: As, to use ignorant Men to convert the Learned; to use the most incomprehensible Mysteries, and the hardest Precepts, to destroy the most establish'd and indulgent Principles; to use Death to make his Followers own him for the only Immortal God; to use Torments and Deaths to multiply his Disciples; to bring the proudest of Men to submit to Fishermen, and make the most haughty Nations obey them; to make the greatest *Philosophers* acknowledge the Doctrine of the Cross for the only true Wisdom, and to pass Sentence  
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of Folly upon their former Ideas. In a Word: To force Men to acknowledge, that their wisest Ancestors have been grossly Mistaken, that their Gods are Devils; and this by Means, which according to all the Rules of Nature are the most opposite to such a Design, is the greatest of Wonders. If this happens, if such a Religion gains Ground and prevails, all seeming Contradictions in the Articles of your New Religion, all its surprising Mysteries and Opposition to Sensuality, tho' they may startle Reason and affright Nature, far from moving a reasonable Man from believing it, would rather confirm his Faith. It would, in some respects, be harder to submit our Reason to its Doctrine, if what it teaches was less difficult. For if once it comes to be establish'd, the greater the Difficulties of its Doctrine are, the more they will add to the Motives of its Credibility; because it is, infine, very manifest, that nothing but Truth, and God can be the Author of so stupendious a Work.

This which we have so reasonably supposed to be the Inference of *Seneca*, naturally leads to the Conclusion we ought to draw; that since we see this great Work effected, since *Christianity* has thus in Fact prevail'd, it must certainly be the Work of  
Truth

Truth and GOD. Consequently the difficult Mysteries of our Faith should rather enliven, than weaken our Belief.

Instead of enlarging (as might easily be done) upon this Proof of *Christianity*, and the Inference we ought to draw from it, I will give a short hint of a like Proof of *Catholick* Religion, from supposing the like sort of Conference between St. *Xaverius*, for Example, and an *Indian*, at his Entrance into those Countries.

It is manifest, beyond the boldest Denial, that he propagated there among *Pagans*, not only *Christianity*, but also what our Adversaries call *Popery*. It is manifest he did it by the like Means as the *Apostles* propagated Christianity: By Preaching, Poverty, Abnegation and the Cross; by proposing (besides the Trinity and *Incarnation*) a Transubstantiation, Praying to Saints, Purgatory, Confession, &c. It is manifest he confirm'd his whole Doctrine by Miracles. Even *Hackluit* calls him, *the Evangelical Workman and divine Master of the Indians, of whose excellent Virtues and miraculous Works the Indian Histories are full*; and *Tavernier* styles him, another St. *Paul*, *the true Apostle of the Indians*; and *Kempffer* printed a few Years since, here in *English*, in his History of *Japan*, call's him, *the great Apostle of the Indies* St. Francis Xavier.



vier. page 112. Thus these *Protestant* Writers, forced by the Evidence of Facts, speak of him. By the same Evidence of Facts the *Catholick* Religion must be True, since it is proved by the like miraculous Facts as we prove the Truth of *Christianity*.

If you will suppose the *Indian* might reply, that he heard by Merchants trafficking to the *Indies*, that one *Martin Luther* had also made a great Progress in *Europe* by preaching a Doctrine very different, and contradictory to *Catholick* Doctrine in several Articles; how easily might *St. Xaverius* have answer'd: Great, I own, is that *Luther's* Progress. But all the wonder of his Progress was in the unhappy Circumstances and Vices of the Times; not in the Sobriety or Virtue of his Life, nor in the Methods and Miracles by which his new Doctrine was spread. It was carried on by granting greater Liberty, by casting off several hard Obligations of the Old Religion. Where the Bent of Nature draws, no wonder Men should follow. To drive up against that Bent, Grace is requisite, and often Miracles too. But to gain *Proselytes* by seconding the Inclinations of Nature, where is the Prodigy? Since the Religions which he and I preach are contradictory in many Points (as you have been rightly inform'd) they cannot both be from

G O D.

GOD. That mine is from GOD, the Miracles he has empower'd me to work in Confirmation of it, is an unquestionable Evidence, &c.

CRITOM. I have perus'd your Papers with Attention, and must own they set the Matter in a strong Light.

EUDOX. If however you have any thing to object, I shall willingly give you a fair Hearing, and, I hope, a full Answer.

CRITOM. Setting aside for the present, as you have allow'd me, what regards *Catholick* Religion, I find little remaining to be objected as to *Christianity* in general, but what has been in Effect consider'd already under the several Heads of our Conferences. Yet I will not omit to mention in particular what I have heard *Deists* object from the Obscurity of *Scripture*. Not to insist upon other Difficulties against believing the *Scripture* to be Divine, yet sure (say the *Deists* from their *Oracle*) as to the doctrinal and preceptive Parts, if it was Divine, it would have been clear, and easily intelligible to all. For no wise Law-giver, they tell you, chuses to give his Laws in *Riddles*. Then they add: But it is manifest the Doctrines and Precepts of *Scripture* are not clear: For if it were so, how could there possibly be so many Disagreements in those

Points among *Christians* who profess to believe it Divine? If it is so clear, how idle were all those thousands of voluminous Writers, who pretend to have taken so much pains to fix its true Meaning? How come so many *Interpreters* to labour, and after all to vary, in explaining what must have been very plain before hand, and easily intelligible to all?

EUDOX. Here again, without entering into the *Controversies* among Christians about the Clearness or Obscurity of Scripture, it is abundantly sufficient against *Deists* to observe, that altho' wise Law-givers chuse not to give their Laws in Riddles (for this, indeed, is the full Amount of the *Deists* Argument here) yet they have given them in such a way as is liable to Disputes. This perhaps they could not avoid, in the present State of Languages and Men. However, they fix'd an Authority in *Judges* to determine rising Disputes. How far God might, if he had so pleased, spoken in such a manner, even in the present State of the World, as to make all Disputes impossible, we need not inquire. It is sufficient that he might very justly leave a Mixture of Plainness in some, and Obscurity in other Places of Scripture. This he might justly do for a Trial of the fair and candid Proceeding of such as would acquiesce to his

his Words as far as they are sufficiently plain; or of the Perverseness of those who through Obstinacy, or Interest, or other Passions would raise Disputes, or refuse to receive his Words in that Sense of them which is sufficiently clear. As to other Parts of Scripture, which might leave any reasonable Doubt of the true Sense, they can no more be made a just Objection, than what we find, and *Deists* must own, is in the Law of Nature with regard to us. For in the Law of Nature, as laid before Men in their different Capacities, some Points are clear'd to all generally, by evident Principles of Reason; others are commonly clear enough where Men are sincere and candid, and not led away by vicious Motives; others again are to be determined by Authority, in such a manner as is requisite for the right Government of the World. Let me add, that the *Deists* Argument here again, is at the Bottom *Atheistical*. For thus the *Atheist* may argue against the *Deist* in his own Way. If what you *Deist* call the Religion of Nature is the Law of God, as you hold it to be, why did he not make it fully and uniformly clear to all. Would a wise Law-giver chuse to give his Laws in Riddles? And what are obscure Points of the Law of Nature, and such as cannot be discover'd but by a long Train of abstract

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reasoning,



reasoning, what, I say, are such things better to the greatest part of Men, than Riddles.

CRITOM. But what would you reply to *Deists*, when they enter into a Detail upon the many thousand *different Readings* of Scripture, and then ask, how can the true Reading be ascertain'd? Or when they are large upon their Observations, that the Original Languages of Scripture are long since dead Languages, understood by few, or rather by none, considering the distance of Time from their being first written, and how much many Expressions depend upon former Customs, very different from ours, and which are now either not all, or very imperfectly known?

EUDOX. Whatever they have said of this kind might easily be answer'd in Particular. But I would refuse to enter into the Detail, and would insist upon it, that it is sufficient against them, to observe that as other Writers are judged, by them, to be sufficiently intelligible, notwithstanding all they can say of dead Languages and unknown Customs, so they have no Reason to deny the same of Scripture. As to any thing farther concerning the Authentickness of Copies or the Sense of Scripture; I would add; that what they allege of that kind against the Scripture, has no Appearance of Force against that Body of *Christians* which  
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is still the greatest, and was for many Ages the only that could be term'd the *visible Church* of *CHRIST*. For that *Church* maintains, that *CHRIST* has left an unerring Authority with her, to clear and ascertain all such Doubts as might come to require a Decision.

CRITOM. You have in great Measure prevented another Argument which they use against Scripture. Give me leave however to propose it. It cannot be denied, that Scripture is in some Places obscure. The Light of Reason, they cry, is clear. And is not a clear Rule to be prefer'd to an obscure one? Would you think that Man who would chuse to quit a clear Light, that he might be guided by an obscure one?

EUDOX. I should think him very unwise. But I must also think them so, who imagine they have here made an Objection of any Moment. We no more quit the Light of Reason when we admit of Revelation, than they quit their Eye-sight when they take a *Telescope*. If the Light of Revelation is obscure in some respects, so is the Light of Reason. Nor can Scripture be any more call'd an obscure Rule, than the Law of Nature. Nay, many things are more obvious to the general Capacity of People in the Scripture, than they could be drawn by

them reasoning from first Principles to remote Inferences. Many Points of Morality are very clearly declared in Scripture, and own'd by *Deists* to be conformable to the Law of Nature, which yet are such, that it is manifest, People of ordinary Capacities cannot demonstrate them by close reasoning. And here again, you will please to observe how inconsistently *Deists* argue against Christianity. Sometimes they acknowledge that the Morality of the *Gospel* is conformable to the Light of Reason; and here, that the *Gospel* is so obscure, that it cannot be a good Rule. If it is so obscure, how come they to see it is conformable to reason? If Scripture is so unintelligible as they seem to make it, how come they to understand it so well as to see it is very conformable to the Law of Nature? This is just as if you should affirm you do not understand what I say, but yet that you see, that I say the same as you do.

CRITOM. Such inconsistent Ways of arguing are very frequent with them. And moreover, as to the present Point, affirming, that the Law or Religion of Nature, is clear to all, is affirming, what any one may, and what daily Experience obliges every Body to contradict. For every Body must own, that there are many Disagreements among Men about several Particulars  
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of the Law of Nature, some affirming, others denying them to be according to Reason. Many things again are generally judged by the Learned to be rightly drawn from the first Principles, which we cannot suppose to appear so to others. For we cannot suppose, that all are capable of drawing such Inferences, as cost the Learned no small Pains to discover, by long and close Reasoning. There is certainly a great Difference in the Knowledge of the Law of Nature, between the heavy, illiterate Man, and a great Divine. What is plain to this, may want a great deal of being so to the other. If you affirm all is plain, others deny it. If you expect to be believed when you say, all is plain to you, others will equally expect to be believed when they affirm it is not so to them. They are as sure Judges whether a Thing appears so to them, as you are, whether it appears so to you. The Question is not how far the Thing may be true in itself, but how far it appears so to all. This is a Fact, and a Fact that must rest on the Sincerity of the Persons who affirm, or deny it.

EUDOX. How far what you have been now observing may be press'd against those who affirm, the Scripture is plain in all Necessaries, is not our present Business to inquire. But we may insist upon it as a  
I 4 manifest



manifest Proof against such as would pretend the Law of Nature is so plain to all, as to make Revelation be needless.

CRITOM. It is so plain, that the Law of Nature is in many things obscure to the Generality of People, that I have often wonder'd how *Deists* could pretend to affirm the contrary. The very Laws of all Nations, suppose it is not plain to all, what is just or unjust in many things. Hence in many Cases the Laws interpose, and declare what is just, what not. And Laws indeed would be very needless things, if it was evident by Nature to all, what is Right or Wrong. I do not mean the *Penal* Laws would then be superfluous. But *declaratory* Laws, to determine what is Right or Wrong, would be intirely idle things, if all Right or Wrong was naturally plain to all.

EUDOX. Here again we are not inquiring, how far this may be urged against those, who affirm all necessary Points of Faith are clear in Scripture to all People: Nor will I here observe, how far all *doctrinal* Decrees of *Councils* or *Convocations*, would be superfluous, if all things necessary were plain in Scripture. What is at present our View, is to observe from what has been said, that the Law of Nature is far from being so universally plain, as to make Revelation, or other Laws superfluous. All the

the Books of Civil Laws, all the Volumes of Morality, all Discourses to explain the Duties of Men (and how many thousands are there of such Works?) would be so many thousands of most idle things, if the Laws of natural Religion were evident to all.

CRITOM. That arguing of *Deists* against Scripture from its Obscurity, by pretending the Law of Nature is evident, appears so very wrong, that it needs no farther Remarks. Instead therefore of pursuing that Point any farther, allow me to ask, what you would say to a *Deist*, who should argue against Scripture, as *Protestants* do against *Transubstantiation*. You know that Mr. *Lesly* in his Book of *The Case stated*, which made so much Noise, argues thus :

“ All our Senses are contradicted in Tran-  
 “ substantiation : And I stand upon it,  
 “ that since the Creation of the World  
 “ God never did nor said, any thing which  
 “ contradicted the Sense of any Man. It  
 “ would be destroying the Certainty of  
 “ every thing. Miracles are Appeals to  
 “ our Senses, and without believing our  
 “ Senses we can trust to no Miracles, and  
 “ by Consequence to no Revelation.” If  
 this way of arguing holds good, it is manifest the Scripture Miracles cannot be true ;  
 since it relates some wherein Mens Senses

were contradicted. For there it is related, that the HOLY GHOST appeared in the Shape of a Dove, over the Head of *CHRIST*, and that two *Angels* appeared at the Sepulchre, in the Likeness of two Men. If therefore it may reasonably be insisted on, that GOD never did any thing that contradicted the Sense of any Man, those miraculous Apparitions cannot be true. For in them the Senses were contradicted; the Senses telling the Persons who are said to have seen the Apparition, that they saw two Men, whereas the Scripture says they were two *Angels*. Mr. *Lesly* says in the same Place. "I take it for a certain Rule, that we must believe our Senses in every thing, or in nothing." If this be so, it is again manifest, that the Persons who are said to have seen two Angels, could not believe they were Angels, because to their Senses they appeared to be Men. Their Senses misinform'd them when they made them think they saw two Men. Consequently by that which Mr. *Lesly* takes for a certain Rule, none of the Miracles must be believed which seem'd to be wrought in favour of *Christianity*, according to what the Scripture relates.

EUDOX. What is thus urged, is unanswerable in those Principles of Mr. *Lesly*. And for this, among many other Reasons,

I have often wonder'd he could write such a Book, or how it could be so undeservedly applauded by *Protestants*. What you have mention'd is a very strong Instance how far the Heat of Controversy may carry Men to advance things which they must contradict in other Occasions. In arguing against *Deists* it is clear, that Mr. *Lesly* must contradict what he asserts against *Catholicks*, and own, that GOD has done many things wherein our Senses were deceived. And indeed, I know not what can be more strangely absurd than to say, that if ever things appear otherwise to our Eyes than they are in themselves, we must never believe them any more. At this rate we must never believe our Senses, since they first told us the Sun, Moon and Stars, are less than they really are in themselves.

CRITOM. Why at least may not a *Deist* take the Privilege to say of the Mysteries of the *Trinity* and *Incarnation*, what I am told Mr. *Trapp* has said of the Mysteries of your *Transubstantiation*; that if he found such things in the *Bible*, he could not believe them: Not that he would deny what GOD affirms, but that he should be sure GOD did not affirm them, and that the Text would not be genuine, because GOD cannot assert a Contradiction. Nay, I have been told, he adds, "Should I see a Man  
" raise



“ raise the Dead, and declare such things  
 “ to be true, I could not believe him, be-  
 “ cause I know the things to be impossible  
 “ in Reason and Nature.” Thus the  
*Deist* will say, he knows the Myſteries of  
 the *Trinity* and *Incarnation* are impossible;  
 that ſince he knows them to be ſo, the Wri-  
 tings which affirm ſuch Impoſſibilities can-  
 not be divine, and that if he ſhould ſee a  
 Man raiſe the Dead, and affirm them, he  
 could not believe them.

EUDOX. What you have call'd the Privi-  
 lege of ſaying what Mr. *Trapp* has ſaid,  
 would be the higheſt Impiety. It would be  
 ſaying, that although the Nature and Power  
 of GOD is infinitely above the Reach of our  
 weak Reason, yet he would not believe ſuch  
 things, tho' GOD ſhould atteſt them with  
 the moſt unqueſtionable Miracles. But we  
 have ſaid enough before of believing My-  
 ſteries above our Comprehension, when  
 they are atteſted by clear Proofs of a divine  
 Revelation. And I had much rather leave  
 Mr. *Trapp* to conſider better of the Matter,  
 than to enlarge upon ſhewing the Handle  
 he gives to *Deiſts* by ſuch ſtrange Affir-  
 mations. In the mean time, I own to you,  
 Dr. *Cbritomachus*, it has given me great Plea-  
 ſure to obſerve, that among the Objections  
 you have propoſed from others, you have  
 not vouchſafed to take any from the Author,  
 who

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who of late Years publish'd equally his Folly and Impiety, in pretending to reduce the Miracles of *CHRIST* to meer *Allegories*. It is a Proof of your good Sense, to think so wicked and so wild a Writer is unworthy of your Notice.

CRITOM. He seems to me so very shocking, and so impertinently silly, that I should be ashamed to have the least Regard to his Writings. The Folly of them is so very visible, that it is scarce possible he could be serious in his Attempt. I am persuaded there was a good Design in the Authors who have answered him. But I am equally persuaded, he deserved not so much Notice; and that all he could justly expect, was a legal Punishment, and an universal Abhorrence and Contempt.

EUPHON. The same was always my Opinion of that wretched Author. And if any one was to tell me, that such a Contempt of him is no Answer; I would reply, that both by Temper and Principle, I am far from thinking a contemptuous Disregard is generally allowable against Persons who may differ from us in Sentiments of Religion. Yet where pretended Disputants run into meer impious Extravagancies, and their pretended Arguments are evident Follies, no Moderation of Temper or Principles can oblige one not to condemn such Authors.

thors. Would any one, for Example, think a Writer deserved any thing else, who should pretend to maintain, that *Livy's* or *Cæsar's* Histories were nothing but *Allegories*, and the Facts they relate as real, were only figurative; that the Battles, the Victories, the domestic and foreign Affairs, the Actions of particular Persons, the Changes in Government, and all the other Accounts they give, are only Imaginations, Fancies, Emblems, Figures, without any thing in the whole Course of their Histories, that ever happen'd in the true, literal, and historical Sense of their Words? What Regard then can the Man deserve, that thus absurdly trifles upon the Histories of *Christianity*? Contempt, it must be own'd, is of itself no Answer. But tell me, what Answer he would deserve, who should be so impertinent upon the Histories of *Livy* and *Cæsar*, and then it will be time enough to think of answering the Man that can be capable of dealing so with the *Evangelists*.

CRITOM. I not only never had any Thoughts of proposing any pretended Objections particular to that Author, but must own there occur no others to me at present, but what may be reduced to those we have already consider'd. Only I will beg leave to propose a little more fully than what we have hitherto done, the Objection

*Deists*

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*Deists* draw from the Christian Revelation being unknown to so many throughout the World. How many, in Effect, not only of single Persons, but whole Provinces and Nations, are not only ignorant which is the true Church among the several Divisions of Christians, but are in a manner totally ignorant of Christianity in general. If Christianity was reveal'd as the best, and much more, if as the only Means of Salvation, why are so many left destitute of Means to come to the Knowledge of it? Does GOD reveal so great, so necessary things in vain? And are they not in vain, in respect of those who cannot come to any Knowledge of them? Were they reveal'd for the Good of all? are all obliged to embrace a Religion which so many have no Possibility of ever knowing? Does GOD oblige such Infidels to Impossibilities? Thus *Deists*.

EUDOX. It should be added; and thus *Atheists*. The Objection is at the Bottom *Atheistical*, as most of the *Deists* Objections are; and must be answer'd by *Deists* themselves. For they must own the Law of Nature is from GOD, and Obligations on Men, not only in the first Self-evident Principles of it, but in several others which Men, who make right Use of their Reason, come to know. They must farther own, that as far as Men by a faulty Indolence, or indulg-

ing



ing their Passions, live in the Ignorance and Breach of several Laws of Nature, they must be answerable for their Ignorance. Here the *Atheist* will say, if they are the Laws of GOD, if he requires they should be observ'd, why does he not make them known to all? If the *Deists* answer, that GOD does not require any should observe Laws they cannot know; so we also say with regard to Christianity. As far as any are *culpably* ignorant of it, so far they are answerable: we do not, and no one can in Reason believe, that GOD obliges any to Impossibilities. But we believe he can give greater and fuller Opportunities of Knowledge to some, above others; as *Deists* must own an Inequality in Mens Capacities to know the Laws of Nature. His Goodness must engage him to give to all, what is *sufficient* for their avoiding the *Guilt* of Sin, and consequently, for their attaining the Knowledge of any Truth that would, if duly pursued, bring them to the Knowledge of any farther Truths that are *necessary* to their Salvation. If they criminally neglect the Pursuit, they may be justly condemn'd, but GOD cannot. And this alone, rightly consider'd, is a sufficient Answer to the Objection, both of *Atheists* and *Deists*. But it well deserves to be farther explain'd; and I will chuse to do it by reading to you what I have here

here translated, from the Book I have already quoted, of the Great Archbishop of *Cambray*. These are his Words: \* “ Innumerable are  
 “ the Ways GOD uses to work upon Peo-  
 “ ples Minds towards bringing them by  
 “ Degrees to all necessary Truths, whether  
 “ they be Truths that regard the Mysteries  
 “ to be believed, or Evangelical Virtues :  
 “ Infinite is the Variety both of interior  
 “ and exterior Means, which Providence  
 “ uses to this Effect. We can no more  
 “ unfold them all, than a *Deist* can pre-  
 “ tend to explain in particular, how Men  
 “ come from one Step to another to a cer-  
 “ tain Degree of Wisdom, of Opinions,  
 “ of Prejudices, &c. We come to it by  
 “ innumerable Combinations of Educa-  
 “ tion, of Examples, of Conversations, of  
 “ Friends, of Experiences, of Reflexions, of  
 “ Inspirations, by which GOD works insen-  
 “ sibly upon our Hearts. Not only other Men  
 “ cannot explain in particular, all that has  
 “ persuaded and determin’d others to a  
 “ certain kind of Life, but we cannot our-  
 “ selves go back as it were Step by Step,  
 “ so as to tell every thing, both within us,  
 “ and from without, that served to move  
 “ our Hearts. But what we cannot do

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\* Lettres sur divers Sujets concernant la Religion.  
*A. Paris.* 1718.

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“ to trace back all our Steps, God will  
 “ do in his Judgment. There he will be  
 “ invincibly justified, because he will there  
 “ unfold all the Turns and Windings of  
 “ our Heart, and a Chain of Means by  
 “ which it was in our Power to seek him  
 “ farther, and know, and follow the Truth  
 “ which would have led us to our Salvation.  
 “ Those Means, tho’ inexplicable in the  
 “ Detail, are certain in the Main. The  
 “ Variety, the secret Combination, their  
 “ easily escaping our Memory, often leave  
 “ us no distinct Remembrance of them.  
 “ But God infinitely just and good, does  
 “ he not well deserve we should believe  
 “ him upon the Chain and Proportion of  
 “ the Means he has prepared for us? Is he  
 “ not a better Judge of them than we, who  
 “ neglect those Means so much, as seldom  
 “ to give any Attention to them at all? If  
 “ a Man should find himself suddenly upon  
 “ waking in a desert Island, how prodigiously  
 “ would he search by what Means  
 “ he came thither? We find ourselves suddenly  
 “ in this World, not knowing what  
 “ we are, nor whence, nor where we are  
 “ come, nor with whom we live, nor whither  
 “ we shall go when we part from  
 “ hence. Who is there that has any Curiosity  
 “ to find out this profound Mystery?  
 “ Men take no Care to discover it? They  
 “ amuse

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“ amuse themselves with every thing else,  
“ and are curious to know all things but  
“ the only necessary thing they should learn.  
“ This monstrous Indolence is the great  
“ Sin of Infidelity. *Non piè quæritur*, says  
“ St. *Austin*. What would not Men be  
“ capable of, if they were sincere, humble,  
“ docile, and as attentive as so great Mat-  
“ ter deserves? Even little Children learn  
“ in a short time, a great Detail of the  
“ Things and Terms of human Life, and a  
“ whole Language. Do not many, even  
“ among the most vulgar People, attain to  
“ a great Nicety in Arts? Nor is this all.  
“ With what Subtilty and Depth do People  
“ learn Evil? It is only for Good that we  
“ are without Wit. We are dull to no-  
“ thing but what we do not love. Love  
“ Truth as you do Money, and you will  
“ soon have a great Insight into the most  
“ obscure Things. When God shall un-  
“ close to Men at once, all the natural  
“ Gifts of Reason, and all the supernatural  
“ Helps that have been given them, to  
“ prepare them to Faith; when he shall  
“ shew them those Graces would have  
“ been follow'd with greater, if the former  
“ had not been neglected, they shall then  
“ see at once, what now they do not per-  
“ ceive. And altho' the Justice of God  
“ should be incomprehensible to us, we  
“ ought



ought to believe it without comprehend-  
 ing it. But Man chuses rather to flatter  
 himself, to shake off the Yoke, to sup-  
 pose God was wanting to him, to que-  
 stion his own Free-will, tho' he cannot  
 doubt of it seriously, and to live without  
 Rule, justifying himself in his Irregula-  
 rities, by casting them on God." He  
 presently after explains in short, but with  
 great Clearness, how even the most ordi-  
 nary Capacities may have a sufficient Know-  
 ledge of the Proofs, that evince the Reasona-  
 bleness and Obligation of submitting to  
 the Authority that proposes the Mysteries  
 of Faith. He first observes, that "Mens  
 Capacities open mightily in Proportion  
 to the good Disposition of their Wills,  
 for such things as they need know. And  
 Secondly, that we must distinguish be-  
 tween a simple, but yet a sensible Know-  
 ledge of Truth, and such a profound  
 Knowledge of it, as makes Men, who  
 are exercised in such Matters, capable of  
 refuting the vain Subtilties that are brought  
 against that simple and clear Truth. It  
 is not necessary that the ignorant should  
 comprehend Religion so far, as to be able  
 to refute all Subtilties by which the Pride  
 and the Passions of Men endeavour to  
 embroil the Matter. It is sufficient that  
 the Ignorant believe upon a true Proof,  
 " tho'

“ tho’ but *implicitly* known. Dispute with a  
 “ *Peasant* upon the most certain Principles  
 “ of Husbandry, you will puzzle him;  
 “ he will not be able to answer you; but  
 “ he will not doubt, and he will go on to  
 “ plow and sow his Ground with full  
 “ Certainty, notwithstanding all your Sub-  
 “ tilities. Thus it is with the ignorant in  
 “ regard to their Belief of Religion.”

CRITOM. Nothing can be more reasona-  
 ble than what you have been Reading from  
 that great Man. But give me leave to take  
 Notice of an Objection I have sometimes  
 heard, upon mentioning the Necessity of  
*inward Grace* to an Act of Christian Faith.  
 This, they say, is making Christianity meer  
*Phanaticism*, and Christians meer *Entbu-*  
*siasts*.

EUDOX. It is well known how willing  
 some are to cast an Aspersi<sup>o</sup>n of *Phanaticism*  
 and of *Entbusiasm* upon Christianity. But  
 if I might without Offence, I would tell  
 them, that here they make as ill use of  
 Reason as they do of *Grace*. We own, that  
 an Act of true divine Faith (to make it  
 proportionable to a supernatural End) must  
 have a supernatural Principle, which we call  
*Grace*. But we do by no means say, that  
 we are brought to Faith by a sort of a blind  
 Instinct of *Grace*, without a reasonable  
 Discernment of the Authority upon which

we believe. Where such a reasonable Discernment of divine Authority is had, there can be no manner of Appearance of *Enthusiasm*. Just as there is no Appearance of *Enthusiasm* to affirm, that we have in many things, a much stronger intimate Conviction than we can express in Words. If, indeed, we should be appealing to our *intimate Conviction*, without being able to give any Reason why we are convinced, you might well call such a Pretence of inward Conviction, a sort of *Phanaticism*. But when we have solid Reasons, or Proofs from Authority, there is no Appearance of an *Enthusiastic* private Spirit in what we call an *intimate Conviction*. It is much the same in what we call *inward Grace*. In whatever manner the Influence of Grace in Acts of Faith must be explain'd, there is no Shadow of *Enthusiasm* in affirming such an Influence of it as includes, or presupposes a rational Inducement to believe. But *Deists* have so little Concern about *Grace*, that we need not consider it any farther at present.

CRITOM. Truly I think not. And upon the whole, from what was said in our former Conferences of the Christian Revelation being delay'd for many Ages, and now of its being unknown to many Nations, I plainly see the *Deists* cannot draw any  
just

just Conclusion against Christianity from either of those Heads. For the Proofs that Christianity is from GOD, are drawn from such Facts as are obvious and convincing to any serious Considerer. The Reasons of its being delay'd, or its not being so clearly made known to all, depend on the *Secrets* of Providence. And Secrets, whether of GOD or of Nature, can be no Reason to make us doubt of plain Facts.

EUDOX. Certainly, with regard to the Government of the World, we should allow as much to GOD as we do to Civil Governors. When Men, little or not at all experienced in the Affairs of State, will however be rashly deciding upon them, what happens? Instead of exposing the *Ministry*, they make themselves ridiculous. The Conduct of such Affairs depends on many secret Intelligences. 'Till these are known, it is a Folly to condemn the *Council-Board*. While such Particulars are so difficult to be discovered, peremptory Decisions upon the Proceedings of Princes are by no means the Part of any private and tolerable prudent Man. And if the Schemes of human Policy are so far from the Reach of most Men, how much less ought they to decide rashly upon the System of divine Providence? How little and narrow are the Schemes of private Men? yet how hard to be rightly  
judged



judged of by others? and shall we pretend to be competent Judges of the whole System, and the intire Administrations of an infinite Wisdom? *He that will rather examine than believe GOD's Works,* says St. Maximus, *does not follow the Sense of the Soul, but the Errors of Flesh.* \* How different are our Judgments of human Affairs when fram'd upon the first Appearances, from what they are when fully laid open? If thus it is in things whereof natural Reason may be in many respects a proper Judge, how much more must it be so in things whereof the right and full Judgment cannot be made by meer natural Light, but only by the *Father of Lights* and supreme Wisdom. Of the Conduct of GOD therefore in abstruse things, and of the Mysteries of his Nature, give me leave to speak in the Words of another holy Father; *Do not measure what is above all measure:---The Cherubins submit themselves and do you examine?* † It is both an Impiety and a Folly to call in question the Justice of what it is evident in Fact that GOD has done, or the Truth of Mysteries which evident Facts prove he has reveal'd.

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\* Omnis qui opera Dei magis vult examinare quam credere, non sequitur animæ sensum, sed carnis errorem. S. Maxim. Hom. 1. in Nat. Dom.

† Ne metire quod a mensura alienum est --- Cherubini se submittunt, tu examinas? S. Basil. Seleuc. Orat. 24.

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Where there are such Proofs there is no farther Examination to be made than with an intire Submission, admiring GOD in his Nature and his Works as far as he is pleas'd to give us some Knowledge of them, and believing what he Reveals, tho' above our Comprehension. All farther Curiosity makes the miserable Pretender guilty, but not more knowing. \*

CRITOM. Such Reflections would very soon recover the greatest Part of *Deists* from their general Error, in what they call their Inquiry into Religion. They generally proceed as if they imagin'd the Inquiry were to be made by running through all particular Difficulties and Mysteries, and believing no reveal'd Religion, till all those are clear'd up in particular, to our full Comprehension. This is just the same Absurdity as it is in *Atheists*, to pretend they are justified in not believing a GOD, till they can fully comprehend all things, both in Nature and in a Being of infinite Perfection. And this again is the same Absurdity, as if one should pretend he may justly and reasonably deny the Possibility

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\* Deum curiosi opinionationibus vanis violare conantur; nec intelligunt miseri, quoniam curiositas reum efficit, non peritum. S. Zeno. Ser. 2. de Gen. Filii.

or Reality of Motion, till he can fully explain all the Difficulties that may be raised upon it. Methinks too, it would be easy for them to correct so wrong a Method of judging of reveal'd Religion, if they would reflect upon the Comparison used by the Author of *The Religion of Nature delineated*, whom they generally admire. I see you have the Book there just by your Chair. If you please, I will turn to the Place I mean, for it struck me much as I was lately reading it. Speaking here \* of the Evils which are in the World, (and the like may be said of Mysteries in reveal'd Religion) he says: "If there are Evils of which Men  
 " know not the true *Origin*, yet if they  
 " would but seriously reflect upon the many  
 " Marks of *Reason, Wisdom, and Goodness*,  
 " every where to be observed, in Instances  
 " which they *do* or *may* understand, they  
 " would scarce doubt, but the same things  
 " prevail'd in those which they *do not* understand. If I should meet with a Book,  
 " the Author of which I found had disposed  
 " his Matter in beautiful Order, and treated  
 " his Subject with Reason and Exactness;  
 " but at last as I read on, came to a few  
 " Leaves written in a Language which I

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\* Sect. 5. p. 72. Ed. 1.

“ did not understand : in this Case I should  
 “ close the Book, with a full Persuasion  
 “ that the same Vein of good Sense, which  
 “ shew'd itself in the former, and much  
 “ greater Part of it, ran through the other  
 “ also ; especially having Arguments *a*  
 “ *priori*, which obliged me to believe, that  
 “ the Author of it all was the same Person.  
 “ This I should certainly do, rather than  
 “ deny the Force of those Arguments in  
 “ Order to assert *two* Authors of the *same*  
 “ Book.”

EUDOX. The Comparison is very just, and the Inference is what every one frequently makes in other Cases. For Instance: When a Person, of whose Prudence we have a great Opinion, does a thing which surprises us, instead of condemning his Proceeding, we conclude he has Reasons for it, agreeable to his known Prudence, tho' at present we do not perceive them in particular. If *Deists* would be thus fair and reasonable in Points of reveal'd Religion, the far greater Part of their pretended Objections would be dropt. Upon the Whole then, dear *Critomachus*, and to sum up in short what we have been saying in our Conferences on Religion, I would ask a *Deist*, upon what he refuses to embrace Christianity. The Banterer will be for a



Turn of Ridicule. But one who can be serious (and where can he be so, if not in a Matter of such Consequence) will, infine, come to this; that Reason is a sufficient Guide, and that Christianity proposes inconceivable Mysteries. Here then I would ask him again: Would you then, Sir, measure all things by your own Judgment? Have you so little consider'd how short is the Line of meer human Reason? We on the contrary, are founded in our Belief on innumerable Miracles, related and believed by the most unquestionable of Historians, on the Authority and Example of the greatest, the wisest, the best of Men for many Ages, upon the wonderful Establishment of Religion, against all human Appearance, and against the Opposition of all human Power. Let me then desire your serious Answer, are you or I better grounded? You upon your *private* Judgment; I upon so *general* a Judgment of the best and wisest Men? You retrench your self in your Incredulity, upon what, infine? In a Manner solely upon not comprehending Mysteries. But how many things are there very certain, even in Nature, which you must own you do not comprehend? and can you wonder you do not comprehend the Secrets of GOD? I ground myself upon his Authority, confirm'd to  
me

me by the strongest Proofs, and particularly by Facts, which are much more universally and more easily judged of than abstract Speculations? Which then is more reasonable, my Faith, or your Incredulity?

CRITOM. I will no longer delay to own plainly what, I believe, dear *Eudoxus*, you have already perceived, that I am convinced of Christianity in general, and of my Obligation to embrace it. So strong are its Proofs, so weak the Objections against it, so comfortable its Views of Futurity to those who comply with it, so dreadful to those who unreasonably reject it, that it is a Folly to remain undetermin'd. In the Doubts which cannot fail to rise in the Minds of the undetermin'd, what a Terror must they feel in their thinking Moments, from the Apprehensions of future eternal Misery? How small an Allay can they find to those Fears, or what solid Comfort in the unavoidable Miseries of this Life, from an uncertain Hope (even supposing they could bring themselves to that) of *Anihilation*?

EUDOX. Your frank Declaration gives me a singular Pleasure. It is what, as you say, I had already perceived you was coming to. Nor can I imagine, how any one that pretends to serious thinking on the Matter,

can doubt which of the two Systems, *Deism* or *Christianity*, is more worthy of God, or more certainly grounded. As to those who, infine, in their Unwillingness to believe Christianity, or rather their Unwillingness to comply with the Duties of it, would allay their Fears with a Prospect of Annihilation, give me leave to tell you what lately happen'd to me with one of that Stamp. He was counted one of the sober Sort of *Deists*, as to general moral Conduct. However, he often gave broad Hints of Death restoring him to the State of Nothing, from which he came. Upon his complaining of the Hardships he met with in Life, whereof he had indeed a great Share, I asked him, what Hopes he had of better Success in the Remainder of his Life. He answer'd, that he had but very little. Whereupon I added: Give me leave then, Sir, to ask again, whether in the great Uneasiness you complain of, you ever could say to yourself with any Seriousness, that you could allay your Grief by saying, I have this Comfort at least, that *perhaps* I shall shortly be Nothing. He was too frank a Man not to own that, such a *perhaps* was but a very meagre Comfort. Upon my replying, that there was at least a contrary *perhaps*, that even that meagre Comfort might fail him; and that he might  
fall

fall out of his Misfortunes in this Life, into much greater hereafter ; because however he might be safe in other respects of his moral Conduct, yet he must needs think it a great Crime, not to believe what God had by strong Proofs attested to be his reveal'd Will ; that he could not deny the Proofs had at least a very strong Appearance ; that his very Ways of speaking on such Subjects implied a *Doubt* at least : That consequently he must own there was a dreadful *perhaps* at least in his Case. He partly sigh'd, and partly forced a Smile ; drank the current Health, and turned off the Discourse. Upon the Whole, even supposing there was only a *perhaps* on either Side, yet one of the two *must* be chosen. The one is plainly the securer, the other a desperate Choice. But, thanks be to God, we have seen there is no *perhaps*, but a Certainty on the *Christian* Side.

CRITOM. This indeed I am fully convinced of in general. But still there remains, *Eudoxus*, a great Point undecided. For among those who profess Christianity, there are vast Differences. Besides you *Catholics*, there are *Protestants* of more kinds than I am, or perhaps than any one is able to number up. Am I obliged to join with some determinate Body of *Christians*, or



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may it not be sufficient to profess myself a  
*Christian* in General? I am sensible, that it  
will require more time to discuss this Point,  
than either you or I have at our Command  
at present. But, if you please, we will con-  
sider it next *Tuesday*.

EUDOX. Rather on *Thursday*; when  
I am more sure of meeting with no Hin-  
drance. Adieu.



OF



O F  
LATITUDINARIAN  
CHRISTIANITY.

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DIALOGUE V.

BETWEEN

*CRITOMACHUS* and *EUDOXUS*.

*CRITOMACHUS*.



T was much against my Will that I could not come to you at my usual time. For I find myself very uneasy upon the Point I mention'd when last I went from you. *Christianity* in general, has undeniable Proofs: But as there are numerous, or rather innumerable Divisions of Christians, where shall I fix?

K 5

*EUDOX.*

EUDOX. In that Agitation of Mind which I see you are under, do but resolve, dear *Critomachus*, to use the same Impartiality as you have done upon *Deism*, and I doubt not but you will soon find where to fix among the various Divisions of Christians.

CRITOM. Methinks my only way will be, to take such a Compass as my Cousin *Eleutherius* has done. He is far from a *Libertine* in Morals; he is no *Deist*; he professes himself a *Christian*: But when ask'd, what sort of Christian? He answers; that as *Charity* is on all Hands own'd to be the great Maxim of Christianity, so he is for joining with no sort of Christians *exclusively* of any others. To live *morally*, says he, and to believe in CHRIST, is what makes a Christian. He adds: A Liberty as to particular Opinions, or Articles of Faith (as they are call'd) must be allow'd to all; provided such Opinions or Articles be no farther embraced than is consistent with holding a general Communion with all that believe in CHRIST: But such particular Opinions as are so maintain'd as to exclude others from our Communion, can be no Part of *Christianity*. They are even contrary to *Christianity*, because contrary to *Charity*.

EUDOX. That *Latitudinarian Christianity* (for so it may well be call'd) is what  
many

many seem willing to patronize under an Appearance of *Charity*. But when you come to examine it, you will find it is neither Christianity nor Charity. Nay, if *Latitudinarians* would rightly consider the Case, they would easily see, that what they call Charity in excluding *None*, is in reality excluding more than any other considerable Body of Christians excludes. For if that Charity, which is the great Maxim of Christianity, is so to be understood as to oblige us to include in our Communion all Sorts of Christians who profess in general Terms to believe in *CHRIST*, then it follows, that all who deny they can be in Communion with all such general Believers in *CHRIST*, are in an Error in the chief Maxim of Christianity. Now it is a manifest Contradiction to say, those are true Christians who are in a profess'd Error against the fundamental Principle of Christianity. Such can no more be true Christians than those who deny the divine Nature of *CHRIST*, or the divine Revelation of his Religion. Consequently, such *Latitudinarians* who maintain that Latitude of Charity, as they call it, to be the fundamental and essential Principle of Christianity, can no more own others who deny that Latitude to be true Christians, than they can own *Mahometans* to be true Christians. For in their *Latitudinarian*  
Principles.



Principles (if they mean any thing like Principles) these two must be the fundamental Maxims and necessary distinctive Marks of a Christian, First, to believe in *CHRIST* in general; Second, to believe that Charity obliges all to be in Communion with any that profess a general Belief in *CHRIST*. Hence it will follow, that whoever denies either of those two Principles, is no Christian. Since therefore all the considerable Bodies of Christians deny that a meer general Belief in *CHRIST* is sufficient, and hold that Charity obliges not to be in Communion with all such, *Latitudinarians* must deny all those Bodies to be *Christians*. And then again, since such *Latitudinarians* are but very few in Comparison of all other Christians, they must exclude a vastly greater Number of People from being true Christians, than any other considerable Body of divided Christians does exclude. What then will become of their pretended Charity in admitting all *Seets*? It is admitting them in Words, and excluding them by Principles. It is excluding them on one Hand as believers in *CHRIST*; and excluding them on the other, as denying the *Latitude of Charity* which is pretended to be the necessary fundamental Principle of Christianity. This Pretence therefore of such an universally inclusive Principle,

Principle, is at the Bottom neither Christianity nor Charity.

CRITOM. But after all, *Eudoxus*, is it not very shocking to common Charity, to say, that all others who do not agree with us in our particular Notions of Religion, are not Christians, are out of the Church of *CHRIST*, out of the Terms of Salvation which *CHRIST* has fix'd, and therefore cannot be Partakers of his Redemption, and be saved?

EUDOX. Do but in this Case, *Critomachus*, what you and every just Reasoner must do in other Cases, and all this shocking Appearance will vanish: That is; separate what is not, from what really is the present Question, and explain Words fairly. In the present Case, the Question is not who may, or may not be excused in the Sight of GOD, by invincible and unblameable Ignorance. Nor is the Question, what secret and unknown Mercies GOD may have in Store for such as are in Errors. Such Secrets being known to him only, are intirely out of the Question here. The Question before us is, properly only this: Whether *CHRIST* has left such a Latitude, that all who have a general Belief in him, are in the Pale of his Church, and in the reveal'd Terms of Salvation. If he has really left his Church in such a Latitude, then all who deny

deny that Latitude, deny a fundamental Principle of the Church of *CHRIST*, and cannot be saved by the Terms of Christianity. For by denying the Latitude, which you say *CHRIST* has left, as the grand Maxim of his Doctrine, they are out of the Terms which he has settled. If therefore they are saved, it must be by some other secret Terms of God's Mercies, or by Repentance for their criminal Error, of denying that Latitude which *CHRIST* has allow'd to all. If on the other Hand, *CHRIST* has not left his *Church* in that Latitude, he has made other Points besides a general Belief in him, necessary to be believed. Consequently those who deny such Particulars as he has made the Articles of his *Church*, deny the Christianity which he has establish'd: And if they deny them by any Crime of their own, they cannot be saved by the Terms he has fix'd in his Religion, but must be saved either by some unknown Secret of God's Mercies, or by Repentance of their criminal Disbelief of the particular Articles which *CHRIST* had sufficiently reveal'd, over and above a general Belief in him. So that there is indeed, no more Charity in the *Latitudinarian* Scheme, than in the Scheme of any particular Set of Christians. There is rather less. For, as I observed before, the *Latitudinarians*

*titudinarians* being but few, in Comparison of others, they must exclude a greater Number from the Terms of *CHRIST*'s Church, than is excluded by others. And tho' *Latitudinarians*, as I also observed before, do in Words include all Sects in the Church of *CHRIST*, yet in Principles they exclude them, as erring against the Charity which they say *CHRIST* has made the capital and necessary Point of Christianity.

CRITOM. Still they will urge, that it is plainly uncharitable to say, that the Articles which you hold to be necessary Terms of Christianity, are such, that whoever does not hold with you, is out of the Terms which *CHRIST* has fix'd, and consequently out of the Terms of Salvation. Is not denying Salvation to all who differ from you, and *damning* them, manifestly uncharitable. And here, Sir, when I say *you*, I do not mean you *Catholicks* only, but I mean all who deny the Latitudinarian Christian to be within the Terms of Salvation.

EUDOX. It is very just in you, not to lay the Load of Uncharitableness in the present Case upon *Catholicks* only, while it is in Reality no less chargeable upon others. Even the *Latitudinarian* is no less chargeable with want of Charity, if it is want of Charity to say, that *CHRIST* has fix'd certain Terms of Salvation, and that those  
who



who come not up to those Terms, by their own Fault, will not be saved. Now this is what all in Effect must say. For whoever believes, that *CHRIST* came to teach the Terms which are necessary to constitute a Christian, must believe, that whoever, by his own Fault, does not come up to those Terms, whether in Belief, or in Practice, is not within the Terms he has fixed for our Salvation, by the Religion he has reveal'd. This is as manifest as Words can possibly make any thing. It is no less manifest, than as if I should say; whoever criminally violates the Commands of *GOD*, is out of the Terms which *GOD* has made necessary to our Salvation. As therefore when I say this, I am not at all guilty of Uncharitableness, so I am not guilty of it when I say, he is out of the Terms of Salvation, who *criminally* disbelieves what *CHRIST* has reveal'd. In the first Case; I do not determine on the Salvation, or Damnation of particular Persons. That depends finally on many things unknown to me. Nor do I in the second Case. For it is also unknown to me, how far particular Persons may be unblameably ignorant, or repent of their Errors. But in general it is certain; and may be said without any Uncharitableness, that a criminal *Disbelief* of what *CHRIST* has reveal'd, is of itself,  
as

as truly putting ourselves out of the Terms of Salvation fix'd by *CHRIST*, as breaking the Commandments of *GOD*, is putting ourselves out of the Terms of Salvation which *GOD* has appointed. For we are certainly no less obliged to believe what *GOD* has reveal'd to us, than we are to do what he commands. And hence I would desire the *Latitudinarian* to consider, that as it is not sufficient to believe in general, that the Commands of *GOD* are to be obey'd, but we must moreover take due Care to know and observe, what he has commanded in particular; so it is not sufficient to believe in *CHRIST*, in a meer general Way, but we must use due Care to know and believe what he has been pleased to reveal in Particulars of his Doctrine.

CRITOM. Alas! what an endless Work will this be to the most Learned? How much more to the Illiterate? Where will either of them be able to fix the Points of their Belief?

EUDOX. Such Questions, Sir, have no more Difficulty against Christianity obliging us to a Belief of farther Articles, beyond a meer general Belief of *CHRIST*, than they have even against natural Religion, and the Obligation we are under to follow other Articles of natural Reason, beyond the first general Principles of it. Whoever  
owns

owns a GOD, must own himself obliged to comply with the divine Will. In some things the Will of GOD may appear upon a small Reflection. We may be led into a farther Knowledge by careful Inferences from the first Principles of the Light of Nature. Other Points of natural Religion may be discovered by Observation and Study. Thus the Points of our Duties to GOD may gradually increase, and in Fact we may rise higher and higher, and do so in Matters of Morality and Religion, as in other Sciences. If then in Pursuit of the Knowledge of our Duties to GOD we come to find, that he has been pleased to declare his Will farther by Revelation, we are no less obliged to follow what he thus teaches, than we are to follow what he teaches us by the Inferences we could draw from the first Principles of the Light of Nature. Nor can it be lawful to stop within the first Notions of Religion, when we find GOD has made farther Discoveries. If then we find pretended reveal'd Religions are opposite, we are sure they cannot be all from GOD. For he cannot reveal Contradictions. We cannot therefore be at liberty to embrace any of the opposite Religions, but must use our best Endeavours to distinguish the true from the false. And as to the Question, where must we stop if particular  
Articles

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Articles must be believed, there is no more Difficulty in this Question, with regard to reveal'd Religion, than with regard to the Religion of Nature. In this, it is not enough to stop at the general Principle, that God is to be obey'd; nor is it enough in that, to stop at the general Principle, that *CHRIST* is to be believed. In both we must stop where clear Inferences or Authority, fix the Points of Practice and Belief, upon a prudential Diligence of Inquiry.

CRITOM. If I take your Meaning right in what you have been saying, that even *Deists* do not pretend it is sufficient to stop at the first Principles of Reason, you would infer, that not only Christians, but even *Deists* must condemn *Latitudinarianism* in Christianity.

EUDOX. Most certainly. For such a Latitude in Christianity, is what cannot be allow'd even in *Deism*. For tho' *Deists* pretend the Law of Nature is our only Rule, yet they neither do, nor can pretend that it is sufficient to stop at the first Principles of the Law of Nature. They easily see how wild a World we should have, and how contrary to civil Society it would be, if every one was allow'd to refuse Obedience to any Laws beyond the very first Principles of the Light of Nature; and might be thought to have  
Reason



Reason for his Refusal, by saying, there will be no End, if you will oblige me to farther Inferences from first Principles. Nor do even *Deists* less easily see how wild a thing Christianity would be, and how little fit to make an united Body, if you suppose it requires no more than a meer general Belief in *CHRIST*, without any Obligation to believe any farther Articles of reveal'd Religion. The *Deist* will farther tell the *Latitudinarian* Christian, that as it is evident, there must be a Submission to Authority of *Magistrates* and *Laws*, in fixing many Points beyond what is precisely evident to all by the Light of Nature, because otherwise the World would be full of Disorders and Confusion; so he will no less tell you, that Christianity would be as full of them, if it were sufficient to believe only in general the first Principles of Christianity, without any Obligation to particular Doctrines and Precepts.

CRITOM. It seems then, you would conclude against *Latitudinarian* Christians, as *Grotius* does against *Deists* who would pretend to hold a GOD, and yet deny his Providence. He observes (and indeed very justly) that to deny a GOD, and to deny the Providence of GOD, in the Government of the World, is equivalent, as to all moral  
Intents

Intents and Purposes. \* In the like manner you would infer, that to believe in *CHRIST*, without being obliged to any particular Articles beyond that general Belief in him, is to all Intents and Purposes much the same as *Deism*, and can have little or no different Influence on the Minds and Actions of Men.

EUDOX. Such truly seems to be the Case between a *Deist* and a Latitudinarian Christian. The Difference, will in the Upshot, come to be little more than *Nominal*. For if *CHRIST* came only to oblige us to a generical Belief in him, and not to oblige Christians to any System of Doctrines and Precepts; then they are to all Intents and Purposes of Belief and Practice (except meerly a *general, unexplain'd, unspecified* Belief in *CHRIST*) left to all the Liberty of *Deists*. And a *Deist* may with a great deal of Reason say, he can see no need of such a *generical Belief* in *CHRIST*, while the Latitudinarian maintains, that whatever either *CHRIST* or his *Apostles* may have taught upon any Particulars, Christians are after all left at a full Liberty to receive or reject any, or all such particular Points.

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\* *Revera negare Deum esse, aut negare a Deo curari actiones humanas, si moralem effectum respicimus, tantundem valet. Lib. 2. de Jure. B. & Pacis. cap. 20. §. 46.*

CRITOM. Here, I suppose, *Latitudinarians* will tell the *Deists*, that besides a general Belief in *CHRIST*, they believe him to be their *Redeemer* and their *Teacher*: That in a *Redeemer* they have a great Comfort, and a great Encouragement: That as he is their *Teacher*, and a *divine* one, they own themselves obliged to believe, and do whatever they find he has taught or ordain'd: And that thus there plainly appears a vast Difference between them and *Deists*.

EUDOX. It is very true, this will make a very plain Difference between *Christians* and *Deists*. But then it is no less plain, that this will necessarily draw the *Latitudinarian* Gentlemen from that pretended Latitude, by which they would distinguish themselves from other *Christians*. For if they go one single Step beyond a Belief in *CHRIST*, in meer general Words, if beyond those general Words they add, that he is their *Redeemer*, and a *divine Redeemer*, the Question will be ask'd what sort of a *Redemption*, and what sort of a *Divinity* they believe. If by those Words they mean any specifical and determinate Sense, they must unavoidably come, either to the *Catholick* or the *Protestant* Principles. For then either their own private Interpretation of *Scripture* must regulate and fix their Belief

lief in those and other Points, or they must be fix'd by the *Authority of the Church*. And what will then become of their darling Latitude?

CRITOM. Why truly, Sir, they will own, that indeed in your *Catholick* Principles, there is no room left for their Latitude; but that all *Protestants* must be Latitudinarians. This, I have heard them say, is unanswerably proved in a famous little Book, intitled *Pax vobis, or Gospel and Liberty*. In Effect, it seems to me plain from this *Protestant* Principle, that *All are to be their own Judges of the Sense of Scripture*. For if it is true, that all Christians may believe *Scripture* in their own private Sense, even in Opposition to any united Body of Christians; if no one is obliged to submit his private Interpretation to any publick Authority that should prescribe a different Interpretation; if all are safe in such Varieties of Belief, as we see arises from the vast Differences of private Judgments; if whole Bodies of *Protestants* are safe in believing differently from others; *Calvinists* for Example, in believing so widely different from *Lutherans*; if *Protestants* judge it uncharitable in you *Catholicks*, to excommunicate those who deny the Decrees of your Church; if no Church has Authority to require my Belief of her Decisions; if these things stand so, if these Pro-  
testant



testant Principles are good, the Latitudinarian may, I think, very justly say : I will maintain against all the World, that no *Protestant* at least, can justly condemn me : I must be left in my Latitude, in my *Socinian*, or *Arian*, or *Lutheran*, or *Presbyterian*, or any other such Notions, with the same Security as any *Protestant* of any particular *Denomination* must be left to his own Sense of Scripture, however opposite his private Sense may be to the Sense of any single Person, or any Bodies of former or present Christians, whether in *Convocations*, *Synods*, *Councils*, or any other way defining, condemning or censuring.

EUDOX. It is by no means my Design here to enter into a Dispute against any Bodies among Christians who are commonly distinguish'd by the Names of *Socinians*, *Calvinists*, *Lutherans*, &c. I am at present only engaged to confute such as we are speaking of under the Name of *Latitudinarians*. I shall therefore leave others to shew how they can confute those *Latitudinarians* without confuting their own Principles, as *Protestants*. This is evident, and you have justly own'd it, that what you have been saying in Favour of that *Latitude*, is of no manner of Force against the Principles of *Catholicks*. And therefore I need take no farther notice of it. But I would

would desire the *Latitudinarian* to take notice while he urges that Objection against *Protestants*, that not only *Catholicks*, but all the considerable Bodies of *Protestants* agree in condemning their Latitude. How far *Protestants* may lay down other Principles which are inconsistent with their condemning *Latitudinarianism*, it is their Business to consider. But this, infine, is certain, that all considerable Bodies of Christians do agree in condemning *Latitudinarians*. And can these Men rest secure while they are condemn'd by all other Christians however differing in other things? They all indeed condemn each other in some particular Points. But they all agree in condemning the *Latitudinarian*. They all agree in this, that *CHRIST* instituted a Church, whereof the Doctrine consists in many other Articles besides a meer general Belief in him. All *Councils* of former Ages condemn'd several as *Hereticks* tho' professing in general a Belief in *CHRIST*. All Churches in the World do the same at this time. Take, for Example, the Church of *England*. There you find a considerable Liberty allow'd to several *Dissenters*. Upon Occasions, the Church here establish'd extends her Communion both to *Lutherans* and *Calvinists*. Yet she by no means allows the *Latitudinarian* Belief in *CHRIST*. She

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expressly

expressly requires *Assent* and *Consent* to several other Articles. She excommunicates Persons for denying some of them. Thus for Instance, in one of her Synods \* *Socinianism* is call'd a *most damnable and cursed Heresy*, and those who are convicted of it, are order'd to be *excommunicated* and not *absolved*, till they *absolutely and expressly abjure it*.

CRITOM. Here again a Latitudinarian will reply, that the Church of *England* at least, cannot condemn him consistently with her own Principles. Her great Principle is (and upon that Principle she separated from you *Catholicks*) that no Man is bound to understand Scripture in another Man's Sense, or in the Sense of any Number of Men or Councils. And I well remember to have read, in a Reply of Bishop *Hoadly* † to the Bishop of *Oxford*; he says, that all Christians have an *undoubted Right of worshipping God according to their own Judgment, and not according to ours*. If then a Man is not obliged to worship God according to any Judgment but his own, how can he be obliged to profess any System of Articles imposed on him by any Church? In that Principle of every Man being his own Judge, why is he not left to his own

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\* *Synod.* in 1640, *Can.* 4.

† Appendix to his Answer to Dr. *Hare's* Sermon.

Judgment? If he has a Right to worship God, and consequently to believe according to his own Judgment, how can he be excommunicated for holding such Doctrines as he has an unquestionable Right to hold? Why are not all left without any Terrors of Excommunications or other Punishments, to rest in a general Belief in *CHRIST*, or in any particular Belief which they judge best?

EUDOX. You must allow me to say here again, what I did just before, that I would (as I have hitherto done) wave entering into particular Controversies among Christians. And therefore in what I said of all Churches condemning *Latitudinarianism*, be pleased to observe, that I am not inquiring into the *Right or Wrong* of the Condemnation, but only into the *Fact*, that it is condemn'd by them all. Whether any Churches proceed consequently to their own Principles, in condemning *Latitudinarians*, it is their Business to consider. But the *Fact* is certain.

CRITOM. It is, I own, certain *Fact*, that all Churches condemn the *Latitudinarians* in Words. But if *Protestants* lay down such a Principle as must evidently, in fine, be resolved into *Latitudinarianism*, why may I not as well rest in that *Latitude*, as in any particular Sort of *Protestancy*? You know how much *Chillingworth* has been



extoll'd here in *England*, particularly of late Years. Now I remember perfectly well, that he affirms, it is a *most schismatical Presumption*, nay even *tyrannous* in any Men, to *restrain* the Word of God from that *Latitude* and *Generality* in which the Scripture has express'd the Points of Religion. Hence it evidently follows, and Bishop *Hoadly* infers it from *Chillingworth's* Principles, that no *Tests*, or particular Sets of *Articles* or *Liturgies*, ought to be imposed upon Christians, but that they must be left to that *Generality* in which Scripture has left Matters. Add to this, that every one is left Judge of the Sense of Scripture. If therefore I think, that a *Latitudinarian* Belief in *CHRIST* is sufficient, how can I in those *Protestant* Principles, at least, be bound to any particular *Tests*, or *Creeds*, or *Articles*, or *Decrees*, or whatever you please of that kind?

EUDOX. My Answer is still the same. I am not now examining how consistently any Men or Churches impose such *Tests*, or *Creeds*, or *Articles*, &c. I am here concern'd no farther than in the general Assertion of this *Fact*, that all Churches condemn *Latitudinarianism*, and do in Fact require other Professions of Faith, besides a general Belief in *CHRIST*, and in other Words than those precisely in which the Scripture

Scripture has express'd the Points of Religion. To mention no other, at present, but the Church of *England*: In her Articles she asserts, that the three *Creeds*, of the *Apostles*, that of *Nice*, and that of *St. Athanasius*, as it is commonly call'd, *ought thoroughly to be received and believed*. And setting aside intirely, for the present, the Question of any Church's Consistency with her other Principles, the Fact admits no Doubt, that they require more than a meer general Belief of *CHRIST*, in the precise Words of Scripture. And indeed, it is manifest, there never could have been any such thing as *Heresies*, or different Churches among Christians, if nothing be required but a Profession of believing in the precise Words of Scripture. All Christians do, and ever did profess to believe the Scripture. What many did and do vary upon, is not the precise Words, but the Sense of the Words. And unless there is some Method by which Men must be fix'd in a determinate Sense, and a Profession of a determinate Sense of Scripture Words; if all the opposite and contradictory Senses wherein the Scripture Words have, or can be taken, are consistent with Christianity enough to make all be in the Church of *CHRIST*, what a strange Jumble will such a Latitude make of Christianity? If

for Example, there is a Liberty left of believing *CHRIST* is a meer Creature, or that he is *GOD* in the strict and proper Sense of the Word, can it be imagined, that the Believers of either Part of so great a Contradiction, are of the same Church of *CHRIST*? Can any Man persuade himself, that whether People believe *CHRIST* is *GOD*, or that he is not, they are still very sufficient Christians? Can it be imagined that *CHRIST* left such great Points indifferent, undetermined, and the Belief of them to be profess'd or rejected, just as every one thought fit? Can any thing be more shocking, than to say, *believe what you will of CHRIST, if you do but believe in him in General, it is enough, as for Particulars, it is no matter what you believe or profess?* This is what Latitudinarians must say, if they mean any thing by what they call *Latitude* and *Generality* of Belief.

CRITOM. Will they not say, the Latitude they mean is thus misrepresented? They profess to believe the Scripture is the Word of *GOD*, and to believe whatever they judge to be there deliver'd. That indeed, as to things that have or may be contested among Christians, they think no such *contested Senses* of Scripture should be imposed upon any Person, but all should be left at Liberty to judge for themselves, and what-

ever

ever they think of particular Points, they ought to be counted Members of the Church of *CHRIST*, and that it is against Charity to restrain those Principles of *comprehensive Communion*, by which all Christians would be happily united!

EUDOX. Certainly you cannot but see, that what you have been thus offering to mollify the *Latitudinarian Scheme*, cannot free it from the most plain Absurdities. They profess, indeed, to believe what the Scripture delivers. But they reserve to themselves the Judgment of what it delivers, or rather they leave the Judgment of that to every one, however little or great their Judgment and Learning may be. Hence various, and in many things contradictory Senses are held, and often in the most material Points. They are not here represented as denying any thing they find in Scripture, but as allowing all to be in the Church of *CHRIST*, whatever they hold, provided they do profess to believe in *CHRIST*, and to believe according to their own private Sense of Scripture, however contrary their private Sense may be to any publick, *Forms Tests, Articles, Decrees, or Decisions* whatsoever. This Latitude is what appears manifestly to be contrary to Reason, to Scripture, and to the universal Persuasion



suasion of all Churches that are, or ever were in the Christian World.

CRITOM. It is true, there never was any Church that had not particular *Professions* or *Creeds* beyond the general Belief of *CHRIST*, or a Belief express'd only in the precise Words of Scripture. It is true, that by those Professions they were distinct Churches as to external Communion. But in the Latitudinarian Notions, they were still one Catholick Church of *CHRIST*, because they all still agreed in the fundamental Point of believing of *CHRIST*.

EUDOX. So indeed they say, but it does not appear they can be serious in saying it. For if agreeing in one fundamental Point is enough to make Men Members of the Catholick Church, I know of no Men that believe in GOD who must not be Members of it. For the Belief of GOD is the great fundamental Point of all Religion. I own that to say, an *English* Catholick, a *French* Catholick, a *Spanish* Catholick, is serious and Sense; because only a Difference of Nation is implied, and not a Difference in Faith. But a Catholick *Socinian*, a Catholick *Arian*, a Catholick *Calvinist*, a Catholick *Quaker*, &c. is a Contradiction; because the Word *Catholick* implies Unity in Belief, and the Words *Socinian*, *Arian*, &c. import

import a Dissent in Points of Faith, and are as inconsistent as to say, a *Catholick Turk*, or a *Catholick Deist*. And I would fain know, whether any one can seriously say, that all the different Bodies, Societies, Faiths, and Churches in the World, can be what the Scripture or common Sense means, by *one Body, one Faith, one Church*?

CRITOM. They will tell you, that where the Apostle says *one Faith*, he also says *one Baptism*. And hence they immediately conclude, no more Unity is required in Faith, than in Baptism; and consequently, that as the Baptism of those you call Hereticks, is sufficient, so their Faith also is sufficient.

EUDOX. It may well be thought, that those Gentlemen (if they were not ashamed to speak out) would conclude by the same way of arguing, that the Faith of *Deists* or *Pagans* is also sufficient; since they also can baptize validly. The Unity of Baptism does not depend on the Unity of Faith, but on the Unity of the *Form*; whereas the Unity of Faith depends on the Unity of Assent to what is reveal'd. Consequently they who differ in Belief of Articles reveal'd, have not one and the same Faith; no more than those give one and the same Baptism, who differ in the *Form*.

CRITOM. But what if *Latitudinarians* should (as I have sometimes heard them)

argue as *Tamerlane* did? That Conqueror is said to have once had some Thoughts of becoming a Christian, but determin'd to remain what he was, by reflecting, that as it is an Honour to a great Monarch, to have under him many Nations of different Manners, Customs and Laws, so it redounds to the Honour of God, to be worshipped by different Ways of Religion.

EUDOX. Have those Gentlemen a mind to be as good Controvertists as *Tamerlane*, tho' they cannot be as great Conquerors? If they will agree with him in the Reason, they must agree with him in the Conclusion, that *Mahometans* may safely remain so. But it is strange, that either *Tamerlane* or they should not see through that wretched Sophism. A Monarch may leave to Nations their particular Laws as far as they are consistent with Allegiance to him, and with such Laws as he may think fit to establish. But when he has enacted any Laws, his Subjects are no longer left to their former Liberty. Thus God in many things may be honour'd by People differing in several Notions and Ways of Worship. But where he has particularly determin'd either Points of Belief, or of Worship, these must be complied with. And this is the Case in regard to Christianity, which God has been pleas'd to publish and confirm, by the clearest Signs

Signs of his divine Will and Power. And as we are sure God cannot reveal Contradictions, so we are sure, that contradictory Religions cannot be the Worship he requires. We cannot therefore remain in any of the contradictory Schemes of Christianity, but must use our best Endeavours to find that which alone is the Church he has establish'd.

CRITOM. Others will sometimes urge (for I have also heard it done, and in Appearance, seriously) that as a Parent is rather pleased than displeased at the little Contests of his Children, about their different Ways of endeavouring to amuse themselves and him; so God is not displeased with Mens Contests and Difference about Religion, while all Endeavour to please him in their several Ways.

EUDOX. How seriously such Instances can be brought, I know not. But I am sure the Children they bring into Play, will readily inform them, that their Contests with themselves, if they rise to great Animosities, or if in their various ways of pretending to amuse themselves or their Father, they keep not within the Bounds and Laws which he has prescribed, they cannot hope to please him. Give me leave to add, that those Gentlemen, as they compare Mens Variances in Religion to meer childish Contests,



tests, so they must be more thoughtless than Children, if they do not see how great Reason they give to suspect they have really no Religion at all.

CRITOM. They will think this a hard Censure, and tell you, it is highly uncharitable to suspect they have no Religion, because they would not have Religion to consist in *unnecessary, unscriptural* Professions of Faith. They will add: That *Arians, Socinians*, and those you call *Orthodox*, all agree to profess, that *CHRIST* is *Son of God and Son of Man*. You are all then united in that *scriptural Profession* of Faith. Why should not this Unity of Faith suffice?

EUDOX. Because that which is here call'd Unity of Faith, is no Unity at all, but of meer Words. Let us suppose a *Latitudinarian* in Conversation with two, whereof one believes *CHRIST* is truly God; the other, that he is not. One of these calls the other *Heretick*. Pray'e Gentlemen, says the *Latitudinarian*, do you not both believe the Scripture, which calls *CHRIST* *Son of God and Son of Man*. They both answer, yes, certainly. Why then, replies the *Latitudinarian*, forbear the uncharitable Name of *Heretick*: You are both Christians, both united in the Scripture Faith of *CHRIST*. How united in Faith? Say they. Does not one of us say, that *CHRIST* is truly  
God;

GOD; the other, that he is no more truly and properly GOD in the strict Sense of the Word, than you are his GOD. Here the *Latitudinarian* will reply: Those Points, or *Punctillo's* of the *proper, metaphysical, strict* Sense of the Word of GOD, and of the Nature of *CHRIST*, are meer Niceties, Speculations, Subtilties: Set them all aside; believe in *CHRIST* in *General*, believe he is GOD in some Sense; be he GOD strictly speaking, or not, is an insignificant Nicety. I am persuaded that in this View (and it is a true View) of *Latitudinarianism*, it must readily appear to any serious Man, that far from being maintainable, it is even horrid and detestable; notwithstanding their pretended universal Charity in uniting all Religions.

CRITOM. How detestable soever *Latitudinarianism* may seem in that View, yet it is what several Writers appear to me, in their Ways of arguing against *Deists*, to give into. Thus, if I am rightly inform'd, and I have it from a good Hand, the Author of the *Cure of Deism*, printed not long since, tho' he often calls *CHRIST* the *Son of GOD*, yet he also wishes all Christians had kept to the plain Words of Revelation, and abundantly implies, that other Explications of the *Trinity*, and divine Nature of *CHRIST* in other Terms, besides those  
of

of Scripture, are *luxuriant Conjectures, vain Imaginations, Speculations, &c.* What is this at the Bottom, but the Latitude we speak of.

EUDOX. Whatever Authors do really run into that Latitude, either in express Words, or in such as do imply it in their natural Sense, cannot be true Defenders of Christianity. They are at the Bottom more prejudicial to the Christian Cause than profess'd *Deists*, as an open Enemy is less dangerous than a false Friend. And without examining what particular Writers may be guilty in that respect, I do insist upon it in general, that whoever is for such a Latitude, as to make no Profession of the *Divinity of CHRIST* be requisite beyond the precise Terms of Scripture, and will not have it necessary to profess whether he is, or is not GOD, in the proper and strict Sense of the Word, is no Christian according to any Church in the World. For all that pretend to the Name of a Church, or ever did, have always either affirm'd or denied it in their *Catechisms, Articles, Confessions, or Declarations of Faith*. And indeed, it would be making a Jest of Christianity to say, that it neither denies nor affirms, *CHRIST* to be truly GOD.

CRITOM.

CRITOM. Upon a Review of that *Latitude* which seem'd at first so charitable, I now see it is not only indefensible, but, as you said, detestable. In effect, to say it is sufficient to profess a Belief in *CHRIST* as *GOD*, in meer general Terms, without professing him to be *GOD* in the strict and proper Sense of the Word *GOD*, is just as if one should say, it is sufficient to believe a *GOD*, but that no one must require him to profess a *GOD* any farther than in general Terms; without descending to any particular Sense, and without determining, whether he believes such a God as *Spinoza* means, or such as the antient *Persians* meant by the *Sun*, or such as some of the *Chinese* mean by the *material Heavens*, or others by *Pan*, or universal Nature, or infinite, without specifying what sort of *GOD* he means. A Man who should thus declare himself no *Atheist*, but a Believer in *GOD*, must needs be thought a senseless or an impious Man, and who at the Bottom makes a Jest of Religion. Nor is it easy to say, what better Opinion one can have of such a *Latitude* in Christianity with regard to the Divinity of *CHRIST*. And the like appears manifest as to several other great and fundamental Points.

EUDOX. Nothing can be more certain than what you say as to other Points also, besides the  
the



the Divinity of *CHRIST*. Thus, for Example, who can imagine, that *CHRIST* has left the Article of the *Eucharist* so undetermined, that it is sufficient to believe it to be the Body of our Redeemer in some Sense or other, but that it is indifferent, whether you believe it is so in the *Catholick*, or the *Lutheran*, or in the *Calvinian* Sense? It is making a senseless thing, or an impious Jest of Religion, to say that it is indifferent to true Christianity, whatever you believe in that Point, if you do but believe in general Terms, that it is the Body of *CHRIST*.

*CRITOM.* It is very evident, that in those and several other Points, *Latitudinarian Christianity* is a great Impiety, or a gross Absurdity. But then the great Point still remains, what System of Christianity must be embraced. And what an endless Inquiry will this throw me into?

*EUDOX.* Not at all endless. Take the Method you did in your Inquiry into Christianity, and it will be as easy to determine what System of Christianity is to be held, as that Christianity itself was to be embraced. Your Method in determining for Christianity, was not by a Discussion of all particular Articles, or of all particular pretended Revelations; but by fixing upon such general Proofs as shew'd that Christianity is from God. Thence it follow'd, that other pretended Revelations, which

which are contrary to Christianity cannot be from God. And thus all need of particularly discussing other Pretences, was cut off at once. The like must be your Method here. Examine whether *CHRIST* has left you such an Authority as will securely determine your Belief; and your Work will be done. What that Authority declares, must be follow'd and embraced. There all your Doubts will end. Where they will otherwise end, I leave you to consider.

CRITOM. It requires little Consideration to find they can never end without such an Authority to fix them. But whether Scripture, as understood by every one, is such an Authority to every particular Person, or whether every particular Person must submit to a *Church-Authority* in explaining Scripture, will be the great decisive Point.

EUDOX. It will so.

CRITOM. But that, as well as other Controversies between different Bodies of Christians, is what you have been all along waving through all the Discourses we hitherto had upon Religion.

EUDOX. I have hitherto waved them because the right Method in all Debates is to keep close to the direct Point, and to remove others as much as can well be done. In our first Conferences we were on reveal'd Religion in general. I then waved as much  
as

as I could, examining any particular Revelation. When we came to examine Christianity, I was for the like Method of not running into particular Controversies among Christians. I was still for the same Method while *Latitudinarianism* was our Point.

CRITOM. At length however, I desire we may come to a farther Inquiry, and see what particular System of Christianity is to be embraced.

EUDOX. With all my Heart. But then let it be at *Cleander's* Seat. For to tell you the Truth, I have given him an Account of our Conferences, and told him, I could not but think you would soon come to the great Point, what Church among all in the Christian World is to be chosen. By a Letter from him Yesterday, he insists, with his kind Service to you, upon my endeavouring to bring you down into the Country with me. What say you, *Critomachus*, will you go with me next *Tuesday*. I am now well enough to undertake the Journey; and design to fix that Day for *Cleander's* Coach to take us up at Eight of the Clock that Morning.

CRITOM. With all my Heart. In the mean time let me tell you that, perhaps, I am better skill'd in Controvertists against *Catholicks*, than either you or *Cleander* imagine.

EUDOX.

EUDOX. The better you are skill'd in them, the more compendious our Work will prove, by your being able to separate trifling Arguments, from such as may be of some Moment. In the mean while, give me leave to put into your Hands, what I have here translated from the Archbishop of *Cambray*, upon the Point where our Debate should in all Reason begin, and by which all other Debates will soon be ended.

CRITOM. I will consider it impartially. Adieu.



A P P E N -





# A P P E N D I X.

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*An EXTRACT from the Archbishop of  
CAMBRAY's first Letter concern-  
ing Religion.*



ALL Men, and above all the Ignorant, stand in Need of an Authority to decide, without engaging them in a Discussion of which they are plainly incapable. How would you have an ignorant Countrywoman or Tradesman examine the Original Text, the Editions, the Versions, the different Senses of the Holy Scripture? GOD would have been wanting to provide for the Needs of almost all Men, if he had not given them an infallible Authority to spare them that impossible Examination, and to guard them from Errors. The ignorant Man who knows the Goodness of GOD, and is sensible of his own Incapacity, must therefore suppose that GOD has given such an Authority, and he must seek it humbly to submit himself to it without farther reasoning.

Where

Where will he find it? All the Societies that are separated from the *Catholick Church* ground their Separation only upon offering to make every particular Person judge of the Scripture, and to make him see that Scripture contradicts that ancient Church. The first Step which every particular Man would be obliged to take to follow those Sects, would therefore be to erect himself Judge between them, and the Church they have abandoned. Now what ignorant Countrywoman or Workman can say without a ridiculous and scandalous Presumption: I am going to examine whether the ancient Church has rightly interpreted, or quite mistaken the Text of the Scripture. Yet this is the essential Point of the Separation of Branches from the ancient Stock. Every ignorant Man who is sensible of his Ignorance ought to have a Horror to begin with that Act of Presumption. He therefore seeks an Authority which will exempt him from making that presumptuous Act, and that Examination of which he is incapable. All the new Sects, according to their fundamental Principle, cry out to him: Read, Reason, Decide. Only the ancient Church says to him: Do not Reason, do not Decide; content yourself with being humble and docile: GOD has promised me his Spirit to preserve you from Error.

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Error. Whom would you have that ignorant Man follow, whether those who demand an Impossibility of him, or those who promise him, that which is suitable to his Condition, and to the Goodness of God? Let us represent to ourselves a *Paralytick*, who is desirous to get from his Bed, because the House is on Fire. He addresses himself to five Men, who tell him: Rise, run, break through the Croud, save yourself from the Fire. At length he finds a sixth Man, who tells him: Leave yourself to me, I will take you off in my Arms. Will he believe the five Men who counsel him to do, what he feels is not possible for him to do? Will he not rather believe him who is the only one that promises him a Help which is suited to his Incapacity of removing himself? without any farther reasoning he leaves himself to that Man, and confines himself to be with Tractableness and Docility in his Arms. This is precisely the Case of a Man who is humble in his Ignorance; he cannot seriously hearken to the Sects that say to him: Read, reason, decide; he who is very sensible, that he can neither read, nor reason, nor decide: But he is comforted to hear the ancient Church, which says to him: Be sensible of your Incapacity, humble yourself, be docile, trust to the Goodness of God, who has not left

us without the Means of going to him :  
 Leave yourself to me, I will carry you  
 in my Arms. Nothing is more plain or  
 short, than this Means of coming to the  
 Truth. The ignorant Man wants neither  
 Book, nor reasoning to find the true Church.  
 Even with his Eyes shut he knows for cer-  
 tain, that all those who would make him  
 Judge, are false ; and that only she can be  
 true, that tells him to believe with Humi-  
 lity. Instead of Books and Reasonings, he  
 has no need of any thing but his Incapacity,  
 and the Goodness of God, to reject a flat-  
 tering Seduction, and remain in an hum-  
 ble Docility. He wants nothing more to  
 decide, but a just Sense of his Ignorance.  
 His Ignorance becomes to him an infallible  
 Knowledge. The more ignorant he is, the  
 more sensible he is of the Absurdity of those  
 Sects which would erect him for the Judge  
 of what he cannot examine. On the other  
 Side, even the Learned have vast need to be  
 humbled, and to be sensible of their Incapa-  
 city. By much reasoning, they are more in  
 doubt than even the Ignorant : They dispute  
 among themselves without End, and grow  
 stubborn in the most absurd Opinions. They  
 have therefore as much need as the most  
 illiterate People, of a Supreme Authority  
 to humble their Presumption, correct their  
 Prejudices, end their Disputes, fix their  
 Uncer-



Uncertainties, bring them to an Agreement with one another, and unite them with the Multitude. Where shall we find such an Authority superior to all reasoning? It cannot be in any of those Sects which are framed only upon making Men reason, and upon making them Judges of Scripture above the Church. That Authority can therefore be only found in that ancient Church, which is call'd *Catholick*. What is there more plain, or shorter, or more proportion'd to the weak Minds of the People, than a Decision, for which no Body wants any thing more, than to be sensible of his Ignorance, and not to attempt Impossibilities? Reject a Discussion that is visibly impossible, and a ridiculous Presumption, and behold you are a *Catholick*.

I easily conceive, Sir, that innumerable Objections will be made against these Truths. But are not such made to raise Doubts in us about the Existence of Bodies, to dispute the Certainty of things we see, and hear, and touch every Moment, as if our whole Life was only the Illusion of a Dream? I dare affirm, that in the Principles I have here establish'd, there will be found enough to dissipate all Objections in a few Words, and without any subtle Discussion.





A  
L E T T E R

Upon a B O O K Intitled,  
The M O R A L P H I L O S O P H E R.

S I R,



Y your Letter, upon sending me the Book Intitled, *The Moral Philosopher*, you seem to think, that some Remarks upon it may be a proper Addition to the *Dialogues* I have sent for the Press; since you hear, it seems, that Book is much valued by the *Deists*.

That they should pretend to value it, is no Wonder. They readily catch at any thing that may seem to add any Weight, or even meer Number, to their Side. But certainly in other respects, they cannot have any great  
M Opinion

Opinion of such an Author. For as to any thing of Argument, there is nothing in his Book but what has been said by others; and his strange Revilings of *Christianity*, and *Christians* in general, can only prejudice the Cause of *Rationists* (as they love to be call'd) or *Deists*, who have any Degree of Sobriety and Decency. And this is so very plain to any serious Reader, that nothing but great Deference to your Desire, could make me be at the Trouble of writing the following Remarks.

The Title of *Moral Philosopher* seems to be very promising. But when presently you find the Author calls himself also a *Christian Deist*, you soon perceive how little Right he has to the Title. And as a *Christian Deist* is indeed neither *Christian* nor *Deist*, so it will soon appear, that this Writer is neither *Philosopher* nor *moral*. Not a *Philosopher*, because neither close nor consistent in his arguing. Nor *moral*, because his Principles are such, as would soon open a large Way to the greatest Immoralities.

Nay, the whole Management of this Work of his is such, as cannot be excusable, either in common Decency of good Manners, or even in the Principles of Humanity; and much less of any Christian Charity. For he not only implies, but frequently repeats it in the *gross* Terms, that the Generality  
of

of Christians in all Ages, have been so weak and foolish as to be blindly carried away by the *Clergy* : And the Clergy of all Denominations are represented by him, in the whole Course of his Book, as the vilest Cheats. Take from it such unmannerly Strokes, and you will reduce it to a very small Number of Pages.

And yet he begins his Preface with telling the Reader, that *not being conscious to himself of any Malice or ill Design, he is not disposed to ask any Man's Pardon.* But let us ask this Gentleman (as far as his ungentle Language will allow him that Name) a few Questions upon this Appeal to his Conscience.

Suppose a Writer should take the Liberty of giving the most ridiculing Turn to *Magna Charta*, and to many of our most solemn Acts of *Parliament* : Suppose he should turn them into Banter and *Burlesque* : If then he should, in the most contemptuous and injurious Manner, represent all the Meetings of both Houses, all *Convocations*, all Judges, all Bishops, all Courts of Law, as consisting generally of weak or malicious Men, and meer Hypocrites, Cheats, and Villains. In this Case, would such a Writer be excused, by complaining he was not conscious of any Malice or ill Design? Yet this is the Case of the present Writer.



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For so it is he represents the *Scripture*, the *Councils*, the *Fathers*, the *Churches*, the *People* and *Clergy* of all *Ages*.

When therefore he immediately adds, \*hat he thought *he had a Right to treat his own Subject in his own Way*, he should have remember'd, that Religion is not so his *own*, as not to be a common Subject; And that it should therefore be treated with a decent Regard to others. Such a Decency might well be expected from one who calls himself the *Moral Philosopher*. To treat it otherwise, is neither philosophical, nor moral. But if by calling it *his own Subject* he means, that his Religion is particular to himself, this indeed is very true. For most certainly there neither was, nor is, nor ever will be any one, of a Religion so strangely inconsistent. Yet this can be no Excuse for his abusing all the *Christian World*, as he perpetually does, and even in his Preface, representing *Christianity* as meer *Bigottry*, *Superstition*, and *Enthusiasm*; adding (*pag. vii.*) *there are now but few among the Populace but begin to see the Weakness and Absurdity of that Systematical Orthodoxy, and Church-Authority, which have been generally made the Test and Standard of Christianity and true Religion.*

This is making thorough Work with all Christianity, which neither ever did, nor  
ever

ever will subsist without Systems, Creeds, and Church-Authority ; no more than civil Governments can without Laws and Authority of Magistrates. Removing such Systems of Laws and Authority in civil Matters, is opening a Way to the greatest Disorders ; and removing them from Religion, is letting in as many Errors as can fall into the various Imaginations of Mankind. Where is the Philosophy, or the Morality of such Latitudes ?

He then proceeds to lay down some Principles, as he calls them, on which he declares his whole Book is grounded ; and that he is *authorized* to inform the World, that they were agreed on by a *Club* of Gentlemen, who met frequently, to consider the Grounds of Religion impartially. It seems, however, he was not authorized to name the Gentlemen. And indeed one may easily think, there is no Club of Gentlemen but would be very much ashamed to be named, as owning such a *Secretary*, and that they met so often to so little Purpose. For every one of the pretended Principles, are either false, or frivolous, as applied to reject the Grounds of Christian Religion.

The *first* is : “ The moral Truth, Reason and Fitness of Actions is founded in  
“ the natural and necessary Relations of  
“ Persons and Things, antecedent to any

“ positive Will or Law, and therefore  
“ cannot be alter’d by any positive Will,  
“ Law, or Authority whatever.” If the  
Meaning here intended is only, that the  
Morality of Actions is founded in some na-  
tural Relations, what is it to the Deists Pur-  
pose? Who did ever doubt, but that the  
moral Obligation of complying, even with  
the most positive Laws of Revelation, is  
founded in the necessary Relation of rea-  
sonable Creatures to their Maker? But if  
they would hence infer, that no Obligation  
can be laid upon us by Revelation, what  
can be more frivolous? When new Laws  
were made known by Christianity, the Law  
of Nature was not alter’d, nor the essential  
Grounds of Morality changed, but the par-  
ticular Duties of Man were determin’d by  
new Revelations, beyond what we knew,  
or what GOD had been pleased to reveal to  
us before, by the meer Light of Nature.

To pretend, that because the Law of  
Nature is unalterable, we cannot be put  
under any new Obligation from any Reve-  
lation, is the wretched *Sophism* of the Book  
intitl'd, *Christianity as Old as the Creation*,  
and has been sufficiently refuted in the Dia-  
logues. Nor indeed, could it need any  
other Confutation (if it was not so much  
insisted on) than only to observe, that as  
we are under Obligations to comply with  
such

such Laws of Nature as become known to us farther and farther, as we *gradually* improve in Reason and Knowledge, without any Change in the Law of Nature ; so there is no Appearance of justly inferring any Change in that Law, by our being under new Obligations when God is pleased to make new Declarations of his Will. The original and essential Grounds of our Obligation are always the same, that is, they have their Foundation in our essential Subjection to God : But our Knowledge of what he requires, is not always the same.

The *second* of the Principles, as he calls them, is: That, “ Moral Reason, Truth, “ and Fitness of Things, is the only certain “ Mark of any Doctrine as coming from “ God, or as making any Part of true Religion.” This is so far from being a Principle, that it is manifestly false ; and if applied to all things, as this Author applies it to Religion, it would destroy all Government, and almost all Morality. It is very manifest, we may receive Laws and Truths by *Authority*, without seeing the demonstrative Connexion of them with the first Principles of Reason. If this be denied, and if consequently no one is obliged to any thing but what he sees demonstratively, by seeing *directly* the Fitness of it in its evident Connexion with the intrinsic Nature



of the things, it is very plain (since few things are so seen by the Generality of Men) what Disorders and Immoralities would over-run the World. The like would happen, if in Religion nothing could be obligatory, but those Points whereof the Truth is seen by *direct* demonstrative Inferences, from the Fitness and Reason of things, independently of Authority. The Falsity of this pretended Principle will appear farther, from considering the others which he adds.

The *third* is: That, “The Gifts of  
 “ the apostolick Age were not confined to  
 “ any moral Character of the Teachers, but  
 “ that false Teachers had them as well as the  
 “ true; and that consequently, there was  
 “ the same Necessity of examining all Do-  
 “ ctrines by the moral Truth, Reason, and  
 “ Fitness of things, as now.” It has been  
 clearly shew’d in the *Dialogues*, that such  
 miraculous Powers as those of the Apostles,  
 were never given, nor could be given to  
 Teachers of false Doctrines; it being im-  
 possible that the God of Truth should per-  
 mit Falsities to be as fully attested by  
 his divine Power, as he was pleased to con-  
 firm the preaching of the Gospel. And as  
 to examining all Doctrines till the Truth,  
 Reason, and Fitness of them appear, by  
 evident demonstrative Connexion with the  
 first Principles, it neither could then, nor  
 can

can now be necessary. To pretend such a Necessity of examining, before any Law can be *obligatory*, would (as has been observed) run the World into innumerable Disorders, and be destructive of Government and Morality. And can an Author, who sets out with such Positions, be thought a moral Philosopher? Such a Writer, whatever he may seem to profess in other Words, may well be thought as great an Enemy to Morality, as he is to Christianity.

The *fourth* Position is: That, “Infallibility and Impeccability are the sole Prerogative of GOD; and consequently the Gifts and Powers so common in the apostolick Age, did not make Men infallible or impeccable, as they did not destroy their natural Liberty, but they who were endued with them might make either a good or a bad Use of them, as much as of any natural Faculties or Talents.” This is laid down as a Ground of denying that Miracles can be any Proof of Christianity. How wicked a Design, but how weak and unphilosophical the Ground? Essential Infallibility and Impeccability, are indeed the proper Attributes of GOD alone. But a *limited* Infallibility, or such a Preservation from Error, as is from GOD’s Providence in particular Occasions, and such a limited Impeccability as

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consists

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consists in being preserved by the Influence of divine Grace, from a sinful Use of miraculous Powers to confirm false Doctrines, is not a sole Prerogative of God. It is no more so, than that Share of other Perfections which God has been pleased to communicate to Mankind. Thus, illimitated Knowledge is his alone. Will this Philosopher infer, that therefore we can know nothing certainly, because only God has infallible Knowledge? Nor indeed is there any more Difficulty, in conceiving that God can preserve Men, who are naturally fallible and peccable, from particular Errors, or particular Sins, than that he can by his Providence so govern the World, as to bring his own All-wise Designs to bear, notwithstanding the Fallibility and Peccability of Men. Such an infallible directive Providence this Author owns, in Words at least. Nothing therefore can be more frivolous, than to infer from the natural Peccability of the Apostles, that we can be under Uncertainty whether the miraculous Powers they had were not used by them to confirm Errors. We are very sure, that he who gave those Powers, would take Care they should not be used to attest Falsities in his Name. And the Man that can lay down such a pitiful *Sophism* for a Principle, cannot deserve the Name of a Philosopher.

His

His *fifth* and last Principle is, that,  
“ The only Evidence or Proof of Religion,  
“ is the moral Truth, Reasonableness, and  
“ Fitness of the Doctrines themselves, as  
“ appearing to the Understanding upon  
“ an impartial Consideration and judgment  
“ of Reason.” *If this, says he, be not allowed, there can be no true and certain Marks or Grounds of Religion; but the grossest Errors, and most diabolical Illusions might be received as divine Truths.*

This is nothing different in Substance from his second Principle, and equally wrong and destructive of Government and Morality. For if all the moral Obligations of Men must rest upon this *only* Proof of their appearing so to the Understanding, by demonstrative Connexion with first Principles, what a confused World would such Notions make? How few are capable of drawing any thing like a *System* of Morality from the strict Reasonableness and Fitness of the Doctrines themselves? Authority of Laws and Magistrates must determine the Generality of Mankind, incapable of pursuing by a Thread of Demonstration, the moral Fitness of Doctrines and Precepts in civil Life. And so it must be proportionably in Religion. Nor can any one who believes a ruling Providence make any Doubt, but that God can give such Marks of Men  
being



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being commission'd by him, as may secure us from any diabolical Illusion, in what such Men teach as from GOD, and confirm by miraculous Powers.

These being the Grounds of his whole Book, and these being so far from any Appearance of just Grounds for rejecting Christianity, I might spare myself the Trouble of any farther Examination of his Book. But lest you should think me too backward in complying with what you seem to expect, I will take Notice of some Particulars in the Course of his Work. Few will be my Remarks, in Comparison of his many Weaknesses in Reasoning, false Representations, Scurilities, and glaring Impieties. But they will be sufficient to shew how little he deserves to be regarded.

In the Body of his Book, the first Attack he makes against Christianity, is *pag. 15. seq.* from the Difficulty of understanding Scripture, and the many various Opinions among *Christians*, who disagree in several great and fundamental Points. All that can be made of this pretended Argument, let us reduce it to *Enthymems* (since this Gentleman would pass for a Philosopher) and it will stand thus: Scripture, which contains Christianity as distinguish'd from the meer Law of Nature, is obscure: Therefore there is no such thing as reveal'd Religion. Or thus: *Christians*

istians disagree about fundamental Points of Revelation: Therefore there is no such thing as Revelation. Now if this wonderful Philosopher will be pleased to frame the same Argument of natural Religion, I presume he will soon see how frivolous it is. For the Law of Nature is certainly obscure to many, in several great Points. Many, even among the Philosophers, have differ'd in Opinions, even in the great fundamental Point, concerning the End of Man, and his supreme Happiness. Will this Author infer from hence, that consequently there is no such thing as the Religion of Nature, because Men differ about it? Let thus his Arguments be reduced to *Syllogisms*, or *Entbymems*, and their strange Weakness will immediately appear.

Even the *Atheistical* Tendency of such Ways of arguing is very visible. For if the various Opinions of Christians are Proofs, that Revelation cannot be our Rule, the differing Notions of Men about moral Duties, is equally a Proof, that we have no Rule at all. And hence the *Atheist* will say; if there was a God infinitely wise and good, he must give a clear and universal Rule; whereas the various Notions of Men shew there is no such universal Rule. If here this *moral Philosopher* does not see the Emptiness of his Argument, greater is his Blindness than was ever induced by *Priestcraft*,

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*craft*, of which he talks beyond all Bounds  
of common Decency.

To speak directly to what may seem to  
have any Appearance of Argument in the  
Case; it is readily answer'd, that however  
obscure some Places of Scripture may be,  
yet in many things it is no less intelligible  
than other Books. If it is not, how comes  
this Author so often to pretend arguing from  
it? Would he argue from unintelligible  
Words? But besides, a sufficient Plainness  
of many Texts in the Words themselves, if  
you take the Tradition and Authority of the  
Church into your Help (as in all Reason  
you ought) there are a great Number of  
Points beyond the meer Law of Nature,  
made so clearly known by Scripture, that  
nothing but Perverseness can make any  
doubt of them. If farther you add such  
an Authority in explaining Scripture as is  
secured from Error by divine Assistance (and  
such an Assistance is maintain'd by the great-  
est Body of Christians) here all Doubts will  
be resolved. What that Authority decides,  
will be a fixt Point of Christianity. And  
hence it is manifest, there must needs be a  
less Disagreement of Opinions in Articles of  
Christianity, than in Points of natural Reli-  
gion. For the Generality of People are  
manifestly more capable of an uniform Sub-  
mission to Authority, than they are of de-  
ciding

ciding uniformly, by a Train of philosophical Consequences.

If any thing can be weaker than what this Author would infer from the various Opinions of Christians, it is what he adds, pag. 17. After having there named some fundamental Points of Christianity, he says: “ Perhaps it is hardly possible for any two  
“ thinking inquisitive Men to form the same  
“ Opinion and Judgment about them.  
“ None of the Doctrines therefore of Revelation can be fundamental or necessary,  
“ because Mistakes in such a Case are easily  
“ made, and may be unavoidable; nay,  
“ no Man can ever be certain that he  
“ understands the true determinate Sense  
“ of the Holy Ghost concerning such Doctrines.”

For Brevity Sake, let us try the Force of this pretended Argument, in one single Instance, to avoid the Trouble of naming other fundamental Points. Take then the Point of *CHRIST*’s Divinity. And let us here suppose, if this Writer pleases, that it is scarce possible for two thinking Men to form the same Judgment of all particular Consequences that may be drawn from believing *CHRIST* to be *true God and true Man*. Yet it certainly is no less impossible they should not agree as to the main Point. That is, either in affirming  
or



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or denying, that he is truly GOD. The Affirmative or Negative here, must be a fundamental Point. For it cannot be indifferent, whether he is believed to be true GOD, or not. One of the two must be a necessary Article. Nor can the Affirmative be an unavoidable Mistake. Because it is manifest, that GOD could not confirm it by such Miracles as he wrought to establish Christianity, if the Belief of *CHRIST's* Divinity was an Error. We are therefore certain of the determinate Sense of Scripture, upon the Point of his Divinity. Especially in that Church, where there is a Belief of divine Infallibility in declaring Articles of Religion.

And when he adds (*pag. 18.*) That the various Senses wherein Christians understand the Scripture according to their different Capacities and Apprehensions cannot in any Propriety be call'd *a Religion*, but must be call'd *a vast Variety of Religions*, this is no more to the Purpose, than if it should be said, that the Religion of Nature cannot be properly call'd *a Religion*, but must be a vast Number of Religions, according to the Variety of Mens different Capacities and Apprehensions. And when he presently farther adds (*pag. 19.*) That *the intricate and speculative Points* (as the *Trinity* and *Incarnation*, of which he speaks) are

are such, that Men *may believe or not believe*, and which they *may think differently of, or not think of at all, without affecting their moral Character*, what does he here shew himself, but a loose and a thoughtless *Latitudinarian*? For certainly to believe *CHRIST* is *GOD*, or not *GOD*, must effect a Man's moral Character, since it must make him guilty of not giving divine Honour to *GOD*, or of giving it to a meer Creature.

Here this Author finding (as indeed he very easily might) that what he had hitherto advanced would be of no Force, he proceeds to ridicule. But had he ponder'd well what he says, *pag. 20.* That *the Man who attempts to ridicule Truth, especially moral Truth, must make himself ridiculous*, he would have alter'd his Method, and not have made the greatest Part of his Book consist of such immoral and impious Scurrilities as could never have been expected from a Man of any moral Philosophy, or even of common Good-breeding. He should first learn to distinguish between such Scurrilities, and Wit, before he sets up for a humourous and pleasant Writer. In the mean while let him meditate on these Words which *Cicero* puts in the Mouth of *Balbus* to *Velleius* the *Epicurean* (*de Nat. D. 1. 2.*) *Salem istum quo caret vestra natio,*  
*in*

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*in irridendis nobis nolite consumere: &*  
*mehercule, si me auditis, ne experiamini qui-*  
*dem. Non decet, non datum est, non potestis.*  
And indeed it is by no means this Author's  
Talent.

As to what he says (*p. 25. & seq.*) of  
the Law of *Moses* being no divine Revela-  
tion, and of *St. Paul's* discoursing of that  
Law, it contains almost as many Falsities as  
Sentences. But the whole will be sufficiently  
refuted by this one Observation. It is mani-  
fest that *Moses* delivers it as a divine Revela-  
tion. The Consequence is evident; either  
*Moses* was a vile Impostor, or the Law is a  
divine Revelation. This Author says, he  
will abide by the Authority of *St. Paul* upon  
the Point. And does not *St. Paul* declare  
*Moses* to be the faithful Servant of God?  
(*Heb. iii.*) What need of any farther Con-  
futation, or what can this Author mean but  
a meer empty Banter? For how can he  
seriously pretend any Deference to the Au-  
thority of *St. Paul*, and at the same time  
represent *Moses* as a Cheat?

After about sixty Pages spent in opposing  
*St. Paul* to *Moses* (in meer Emptiness of  
Banter, and gross Impiety) he comes (*pag.*  
*80.*) to deny that *St. Paul* or any of the  
*Apostles* ever had or pretended to have In-  
fallibility. He owns, that all Christians have  
generally believed the Apostles had an in-  
fallible

fallible Direction of the *Holy Ghost*, but the Apostles themselves, says he, never pretended to it. To say nothing of the others, has this Writer forgot how often *St. Paul* speaks expressly as from *GOD*? And with such Assurance of the Truth of his Doctrine, as to pronounce *Anathema* even to an Angel from Heaven, that should preach otherwise than he had done? (*Gal. i. 8.*) Is this the Language of one who thought he was fallible or liable to Errors in what he thus taught?

As to this Author's calling the Claim of *Infallibility* in the Church of *Rome*, a wild and impudent Claim, the Politeness of the Language needs no Remark. A *Cynick* would scarce use such Expressions. But certainly no Philosopher would repeat such a wretched Argument against the Infallibility of the Apostles, as he does, *pag. 83*: That Infallibility is *the Prerogative of God alone*. Life and Immortality, and all Perfections, are the Prerogative of *GOD* alone in the illimitated Sense. Can none of them be communicated to Men in a limited Degree?

He had affirm'd just before (and no less unphilosophically) that whatever immediate Inspiration from *GOD* the Apostles might have of the Doctrines they taught, they could not by any Miracles convince any other



other Man, that the Doctrines they taught were inspired. But since he seems to allow their miraculous Powers were from GOD, what Idea must he have of GOD if he thinks GOD could permit such Wonders to be wrought in his Name, to confirm false Doctrines? Nor does there need any farther Proofs than what has been consider'd in the *Dialogues*, to convince any one that the Miracles of *CHRIST* and his Apostles were solid Grounds of the Truth of their Doctrines being from GOD. Nay even this Writer, forgetting himself, as he often does, expressly calls the Miracles of *CHRIST* (*pag. 173.*) *the strongest and clearest Evidence.*

Nothing can therefore be more absurd, than to find him adding (with that confident Air which he always assumes) that *for a Man to convey a Truth in Fact upon the Authority of God, is most absurd and impossible.* For, on the contrary, there is not the least Appearance of Impossibility in it. Because it is manifest, that GOD can preserve Men, when he pleases, from being deceived, or deceiving, as well as from any other Evils. Men, so directed by his divine Assistance, may convey Truths either in Fact or Doctrine upon his Authority, when either by immediate Revelation, or by Miracles he declares, that he speaks by Men so directed.

We

We then receive their Doctrines from Men, not on their meer human Authority, but as from Men commission'd and secured from Errors by the Direction of GOD. To pretend any Impossibility here, is a strange Weakness.

And moreover to pretend, as he does, that the moral Fitness of Things is the *only Proof* that we can have of Doctrines coming from GOD, is so far from being true, that it is also, as has been observed, of very dangerous Consequence to Government, and no less destructive of Morality than of Faith. *That Principle*, says he, *pag. 86. Readily adhered to, would keep Mankind clear in Point of Religion.* Yes, truly, it would clear it in a Manner all away. For if Men can have no Proof of any Doctrine or Obligation coming from GOD, but what they see in a Train of evident Consequences from the intrinsic Reason and Fitness of things, how narrow will be the Bounds of Duty to most Men? If the *Deist* will here say, that Mens Duty in many things must be determin'd by Laws and Magistrates, all this *Cant* of nothing to be admitted, but upon the *evident Fitness of things*, is at an End. For altho' the Necessity of *some* Government, and consequently of Mens Obedience in *some things*, may be deduced, by the Generality of People, from evident Principles,

Principles, yet the moral Truth and Fitness of many Laws cannot be so generally seen. Will this *Moral Philosopher* imagine the Generality of Men are as capable of proving their Duties in all Particulars, as a *Grotius* and a *Puffendorf*. Even these Authors are sometimes puzzled, and sometimes mistaken. What then must the Illiterate do? If you say, they must comply with Laws and Directions upon the Authority of Superiors, you demand of the Generality of Men an *implicit* Belief, which at other times you pretend to ridicule.

I will not imitate him in Repetitions, and shall not therefore take any farther Notice of what he urges again of the different Opinions among Christians upon great Points. Much less will I lose Time in making particular Remarks upon his foul-mouth'd Language against all Christian Churches and Clergy, especially, *pag.* 96. and 100. Yet it may not be amiss to take Notice, that while he would seem to except a few of the Clergy from being meer Cheats, and to allow some of them to be reasonable Men, he in the same Breath, makes even these few to be as great Villains as the rest. “ I know, says he, *pag.* 101. very well, that  
 “ many Ecclesiasticks of the several different  
 “ Denominations, are wise and reasonable  
 “ Men, and lay no Stress upon any thing  
 “ in

“ in Religion, but on moral Truth  
“ and Righteousness. But then, pray ye,  
“ how few are these.” Without taking  
Notice of his *many* being only *few*, by what  
Philosophy and Morality can he excuse those  
many, or those few, from being most vile  
Hypocrites, in subscribing *Articles*, in pro-  
posing *Creeds*, in administering *Sacraments*,  
if they lay no Stress upon any such things?

When hence he comes to speak of the  
Sacraments, he does it in so loose, so pro-  
phane, so gross a Manner, that methinks  
he could not expect any one would be idle  
enough, to follow him through all his particu-  
lar Absurdities. He begins with saying, *pag.*  
103. that those things are maintain'd by the  
Clergy, only upon Designs of *Interest*, and  
of *lording* it over the Laity, without any *just*  
*Grounds* for the things themselves. Perhaps  
nothing will make such Writers see more  
clearly the Weakness of such Arguings, than  
to put the same Way of Reasoning in the  
Mouth of a *Leveller*, for Example. Let  
one of them, just in this Author's Style,  
say: There is no *just Ground* for the Au-  
thority of Kings, or the Inequality of  
Possessions, or any Laws; they are meer  
Inventions of *interested Men*; every one  
has equal Right to any thing; all pretended  
Right to Goods above others, is an *usurped*  
Claim. Then let the *Leveller*, in this  
Writer's



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Writer's Words, only just putting the Name of *Magistrates* instead of *Clergy*, tell his Readers: *Magistrates understand these things well enough. They will never question your Want of Title, if you will but hear and pay them well; or if you pay them well, it is no Matter of Consequence to them, whether you hear them or not, &c. pag. 106.* Can either civil *Magistrates*, or *Ecclesiasticks* be thus treated with any Decency? Where is the Morality of thus spiriting up the Mob against all governing Authority in Church or State?

He tells you in the next Place, (*pag. 117.*) that Christianity or reveal'd Religion, consists in *the Belief of Doctrines which cannot be understood.* And then in the most unnatural Way that ever was used in a *Dialogue*, he gives a long *Sermon*, as he calls it, to refute the Doctrines of Christianity. It seems then, Christianity can be sufficiently understood, as to its chief Points. Otherwise, how can they be refuted, as being Christian Doctrines? It is observable too, that he says, *pag. 119.* That *to oblige a Man in preaching, to talk Sense, would be the most unreasonable Nonsense.* This is design'd for one of his very arch Sneers at the Clergy. But unless he will also have it serve as an Apology for himself, how shall we account for his saying (*pag. 120.*) that *St. Paul* was

was convinced by a Miracle, while he often pretends there can be no Conviction from Miracles? He tells you again, in the next Sentence, that the Law of *Moses* had the best Plea in the World of any human Law, for being the Law of God. What Sense can there be in this, in an Author who is frequently representing the Law of *Moses* as a most vile and glaring Imposture?

Many such things in his Sermon would require that Apology he has laid in against a Preacher being obliged to speak Sense. But a farther Apology will be requisite for the many Calumnies he advances. Thus, what can any thinking Man judge of him, while he pretends he will abide by the Authority of *St. Paul*, and yet can insultingly ask (*pag.* 133.) whether any of the Clergy now will pretend it is *probable* or *credible*, that God could command *Abraham* to sacrifice his Son? Does he not know, that *St. Paul* (*Heb.* ii.) expressly commends the Faith of *Abraham* for his Readiness to comply with that Injunction? But this, and the like Instances shew, that there is nothing serious in his pretending to abide by the Authority of *St. Paul*, and that indeed his whole Book is no better than a weak and impious Jest. Nor can any thing be more trifling, than his defying any one to prove there is any such thing as a Law of Nature,

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if it be supposed that God could injoin *Abraham* to sacrifice his Son. For how can it be question'd but that God has a *Supreme Dominion* over all our Lives, and can commission whom he pleases, to deprive us of them, without any Danger of subverting the Law of Nature?

As to what he proceeds to next, to object against the Christian Belief of *CHRIST* dying to satisfy for our Sins, he speaks of the Matter in such a Manner, as plainly shews he is unacquainted with, or determined to misrepresent most grossly, what Divines say upon that Subject. This will abundantly appear from one or two short Remarks.

Thus (*pag. 146.*) He pretends that the Words *Redemption*, *Propitiation*, and the like, so often used in the New Testament, have been so understood by *Christians*, as to be made by them a *strong Hold of Satan and Sin*, while Christians have *flatter'd* themselves with the Hopes of Salvation, upon such Terms as are inconsistent with the Justice of God. That is, as he declares afterwards, *without true Repentance*. Can there be a more false and wicked Misrepresentation of Christian Doctrine, which every where teaches there is no Hopes for Sinners, notwithstanding the Merits of *CHRIST*, without sincere Repentance?

To

To shew farther how little he is acquainted with Divinity, he says, *pag. 148.* It is a *Principle* of Christian Divines, that *God cannot* pardon Sins without some Satisfaction beyond what the Sinner himself can make. Whereas on the contrary, no one, who deserves the Name of a Divine, says, that *God cannot* pardon Sins a thousand other Ways, than by the Satisfaction of another Person. But what Divines say is, that altho' *God* could pardon Sins many other Ways, yet no other Way but that of *CHRIST's* Merits could so fully repair the Injury done to *God* by Sin, nor either shew so fully the Riches of his Mercy, or engage the Heart of Man so powerfully to *God*.

This Author adds indeed (*pag. 149.*) that no Christians ever had the Face to affirm directly, that by the Death of *CHRIST* they could be saved, without repenting of their Sins. And yet he goes on to represent them as if it was their real Doctrine. Such Ignorance or such Malice may be wonder'd at, but can deserve no Answer. Yet since perhaps he may think he has urged something that has the Face of an Argument on the Point, let us just take Notice in short, of what he seems to imagine the strongest. He sums it up, *pag. 152.* thus: If *CHRIST's* Death



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was a full Satisfaction, it could not be reasonably refused. If it was not a reasonable Satisfaction, it could not be reasonably accepted. Does not this Writer, while he prides himself in the Name of a Philosopher, understand that a Satisfaction, however full in its own Nature, may be pay'd under certain Conditions, and where these are not complied with, it may be refused? *CHRIST*'s Merits are infinite of themselves, but not applicable to the impenitent; Repentance being the Condition required. And where is the Difficulty of understanding this, or seeing how triflingly this Author argues? Can such Arguments deserve any farther Notice? Or can an Author be minded, who living among Christians, can say, that they so pay all their Veneration to the *Son*, as to pay none to *God* the Father. (*pag. 153.*) How little must he be acquainted with Christian Prayers, who can advance so great a Falsity?

But passing over large Heaps of vile Calumnies, and Inconsistencies of his Sermon, I will only observe farther, that he is himself a strange Inconsistence of what he says, *pag. 189.* that, *When Men will be learn'd beyond the Measures of Sobriety, they must run into Schemes and Methods of philosophising, equally absurd and irreligious.*

As

As to what he says of Sacraments, as *Means of Grace*, pag. 201. and several other Places, it is all reduced to the modish *Cant of Deists*, in calling them *mechanical Means of Grace*; and in boldly, but most unreasonably affirming they cannot have any Efficacy, nor be divine Institutions, because they have no essential Connexion with moral Truth. Now all this empty Noise will be sufficiently refuted by only observing, that certainly all Favours of God may be made by him, dependent on what Conditions he pleases. To instance therefore in the *Eucharist*. He could promise such and such Graces to those who receive it with proper Disposition. Thus the *Eucharist* becomes a Means of Grace; not an essential, but an instituted Means and Cause of it. And in the Doctrine which holds the Sacraments to be not *Physical*, but *Moral Causes*, there is not the least Shadow of Ground to call them *Mechanical*. Nor can I think such a Writer as this can deserve any farther *Theological* Explication of the Point.

After his strange Sermon, one might hope he would mend his Strain. But he still goes on with the like Misrepresentations of Christians. Particularly, pag. 215. as teaching that *CHRIST* died to enable God to pardon Sins *contrary to the Demands of his Justice*. Is it possible he should

be ignorant that they believe GOD was able to pardon Sins many other ways? Much less do they teach that *CHRIST's* Death enables him to do it contrary to his Justice. But they teach, that *CHRIST's* Merits move GOD to shew Mercy, where he might otherwise have shew'd the Rigour of his Justice. And in this there is not the least Appearance of any thing contrary to his Justice. Those who may seem to have carried their Notions of our Justification by *CHRIST* to unreasonable Lengths, let them answer for it. But let not Christianity in general be so vilely misrepresented.

Perhaps he may imagine there is something like an Argument in what he says, pag. 223. that there can be Communication of personal Merit from one Individual to another, and that personal Rewards are inseparable from personal Actions. Hence he would infer, that *CHRIST's* Merits cannot be communicated to us, to any Effect of our Justification. Can there possibly be a weaker *Sophism*? He cannot imagine we think *CHRIST's* personal Actions are our personal Actions. But nothing is more easy than to conceive the Reasonableness of what we believe, concerning the Influence of *CHRIST's* Merits in our Justification. His Merits being infinite, and he offering them to obtain for us the Grace and Favour  
of

of GOD, upon our complying with the Terms required of us, there is nothing more easy than to understand, that the Merits of *CHRIST* may be thus communicated to us by influencing or moving GOD, to restore us to his Favour by justifying Grace. And this, without any Appearance of any such personal Communication of Merits, as this wild Writer pretends to imagine, is the Christian Doctrine of Justification.

But to proceed to a few Remarks on the remaining half of this strange Book. I would willingly have him tell us, how he, who maintains that we can have no Evidence of any things but by the intrinsic moral Truth of them, came to know of the Apostacy of Men and Angels, which he seems to admit of, *pag. 231.* No natural Knowledge, nothing but Revelation could give him that Information. But indeed the strange Account he gives of the Fall of the Angels, seems to be rather a Ridicule of it, than to imply, that he believes any thing of the Matter.

He thence returns again (*pag. 244.*) to pretend he cannot understand, that *CHRIST*'s Merit can be any *meritorious Cause* of our Justification. If he is resolved to say this is irrational, and that he cannot understand, but that *as much as we give to the Merits of CHRIST for us, so much*



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*must be taken from the Necessity of our personal Obedience*, who can help it. Sure I am, that every one else can easily understand, that since sinful Man of himself is undeserving of the Favour of God, the Merits of *God-man* may obtain for him the Grace of Repentance, which he could not deserve of himself; and that *CHRIST* might so offer his Merits for us, as to require our Correspondence with the Grace of Repentance. Thus it is very intelligible, how *CHRIST* merited for us the Grace to repent, and yet our personal Repentance is so far from being superseded, that it is a requisite Condition to our partaking of the Benefits of our Redemption.

What follows, in this Writer's jumbling Way, of *Moses* and the *Prophets*, is at the Bottom a meer impious Sneer, and representing of them as Impostors, and in such a Manner as deserves no Answer. What Punishment it deserves, let others determine. However, it may not be amiss to observe, that *pag. 257*. He says, *Moses* brought the People out of *Ægypt* by an extraordinary Providence. Thus inconsistently with himself, as in most things, he affirms, that God assisted *Moses* by a miraculous Providence, and yet he all along represents the Miracles of *Moses*, as a perpetual Series of Priestcraft and Cheat. Can such Inconsistencies,

sistencies, and Impieties, call for a large Confutation? and where can be the Morality of this Man, who after he had ridiculed, reviled, and represented *Moses* and the *Prophets* as meer Impostors, tells you, *pag.* 266. That their pretended Inspirations and Miracles, were *possibly* not *knavery*, but human *Prudence*? As if it could be *Prudence* to pretend Revelations, while they knew they seduced the People by false Pretences, and impious Forgeries. Is this the Philosophical *Prudence*, and the Morality of this Writer? Nay, to give a farther Proof of his Morals, you find him afterwards, *pag.* 300. commending *Solomon* for allowing Liberty of Conscience for *Idolatry*, and then most zealously defending the other Kings who favoured *Idolatry*.

It would be too long a Work, to remark upon the many strange Misrepresentations he makes on the History of the *Old Testament*, for a matter of a hundred *Pages* together. Let one Instance again suffice, to shew how little he is to be minded, while he represents Matters contrary to that common Sincerity, which might be expected from any modest Author, especially in speaking of known Facts. Yet this Man has the Face to say (*pag.* 324.) that *Vice and moral Wickedness*, by the Scripture Account, for it is of that he speaks, *had been*

N 5

*approved*

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*approved of and justified in David, their*  
*great Pattern and Exemplar.* What is not  
a Man capable of, who can thus represent  
*David* as a Pattern of Wickedness recom-  
mended by Scripture, while the Scripture  
represents him as so great a Pattern of Re-  
pentance?

No Wonder that a Man of this Confi-  
dence ( he in his usual Language would call  
it Impudence ) after having abused the Pro-  
phets, in the most shocking manner, should  
moreover affirm ( *pag. 332.* ) that *the most*  
*exact and precise Prophecies* can be no Proof  
of Religion. What is this but contradict-  
ing the common Sense of all the World?  
The smallest Degree of Reason and Re-  
flection must convince any one, that God  
only can give a distinct Foreknowledge of  
things depending on free Agents. To sup-  
pose then such an exact Foreknowledge and  
Prediction, and at the same time to affirm,  
that such Prophecies can be no Proof of  
Religion, implies the plainest Contra-  
diction. For it plainly implies, that God's  
Authority confirming the Commission of  
Prophets, by Predictions that should come  
from God alone, can be no Proof of the  
Doctrine they teach. And this is no less  
than affirming, that Doctrines grounded on  
the Authority of God, have no Ground or  
Proof at all.

There

There follows still as wretched Stuff against Miracles being a Proof of the Truth of any Doctrines, *pag.* 344. & *seq.* He there first grants, that Miracles may be convey'd by Historical Evidence, *so as to produce a solid Ground of Belief.* Yet he immediately adds: *the only Question is here, what Proof Miracles can give us of moral Truth, or of the Truth of any Doctrines as coming from God.* Now this cannot possibly be any Question to any thinking Man. For if Miracles can be a *solid Ground of Belief*, they consequently can be a solid Ground to believe that GOD spoke by the Men, who wrought such Miracles in Confirmation of their Commission, and of the Doctrines they taught. And surely what God attests by his divine Power, has a solid Proof of its Truth; since GOD cannot attest Falsities. And indeed we must be allow'd to say, that such Writers as this, have come too late into the World, and with much too trifling Arguments to deny the Testimony of Miracles, which never was denied by any Man of Sense.

But this Man, to shew that he can deny or affirm any thing, says *pag.* 354. that none of the Apostles or Disciples of CHRIST except St. Paul, ever believed in him, *as the common Saviour of the World, without Distinction of Jew or Gentile.* Can he  
have



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have forgot that St. *John* in the Beginning of his Gospel says, that *CHRIST* came to *illuminate all Men*? But why should I stand to quote Scripture against a Writer capable of asserting such manifest Falsities? And indeed, considering his Management, instead of thinking as *Theophanes* here does, that this Author pleads the Cause of Infidelity so well, that *one would think he was hired to it*. I should rather think he was hired to ridicule it. For his Scheme is such as must make Infidelity appear strangely absurd, and (if he will allow me to use his Expression) that it could never proceed but from *incurable wrong-headedness*.

The Inconsistency of his Scheme will appear still farther by observing, that he professes himself a Christian, *on the Foot of the New Testament*, while in the same Place (*pag. 359.*) he rejects the *Old Testament*, which is so manifestly authorized by the *New*. And St. *Paul* in particular, on whose Authority he pretends to rely, refers to the Old Testament as *Scripture* and the Word of God, not once or twice only, but above a hundred times. Can this Author be then thought serious in pretending to allow the Authority of the *New Testament*? Does he not, through a great Part of his Book, pretend to prove, that St. *Paul* preach'd a  
Gospel

Gospel fundamentally different from that of the other Writers of the New Testament? Does he not in particular ridicule the *Apocalypse* in a most impious manner? (*pag. 364 seq.*) Does he not expressly declare (*pag. 411.*) he cannot receive the historical Facts of the New Testament, *as infallibly true?* and *pag. 440.*) that it is *interpolated* in several Passages of the greatest Moment?

As to his reviling the *Primitive Christians*, even as to their moral Character and Miracles, I will only observe, that to deny their eminent Sanctity and Miracles, is denying the most credible Histories; and that he must be thought a most unaccountable Man, if he is serious in saying (*pag. 390.*) that the *Primitive Christians could only work Miracles on themselves and their Confederates.*

I take no Notice of what he had said a little before, of the Right of private Judgment, *without regard to any Authority*, by which he excuses all ancient Heresies. It is sufficient to observe, that it is no less absurd, to allow all Men the Liberty of rejecting *all Authority* in Points of Faith, than to allow them to reject it in Points of Morality and civil Government. Allow every one to reject all Authority, and see what will be the Consequence of leaving every one to be his own Judge in Points  
of

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of Property and Law. The like Confu-  
sion will follow, in allowing the same  
Liberty of private Judgment, and re-  
jecting any Authority in Matters of Re-  
ligion.

When he returns again (*pag. 392.*) to  
object the Variety of Opinions among Chri-  
stians, he must permit us to return, in  
short at least, the same Answer; that this  
can no more be an Argument of any Mo-  
ment against Christianity, than the Va-  
riety of Opinions about several Points of  
Morality, can be an Argument against the  
Religion of Nature. Nor can any thing be  
more plain, than that it is as easy to find  
what Articles or Doctrines are to be be-  
lieved, as what are our moral Obligations  
in particular. In both Cases, where there  
is a Doubt, there must be some Au-  
thority, some *dernier Resort*, that must fi-  
nally decide, and keep Men from running  
into as many Absurdities as they have vari-  
ous Passions, Whims, Prejudices, and mi-  
staken Notions.

In a Word, *Christianity* is no more an  
unfix'd thing, than *Morality*; nor has this  
Author any more Reason to call one, than  
the other, an *Individuum vagum*. And all  
that one can judge of such Writers, is that  
notwithstanding all their Professions of  
Morality, they have no more of this than  
of

of Christianity; and would be left no less to *act*, than to *believe* just as they please. Accordingly it is no Wonder to find this Author arguing (*pag.* 400.) against eternal Punishments.

It may not be improper to observe farther the modest *Cant*, which this Author and other *Deists* often run into, of calling Christianity a *Revival of the Law of Nature*: It is a meer empty *Cant*, and nothing to the Purpose, or it must unavoidably bring them to the Belief of other Points, besides the Morality taught by *CHRIST*. For they know not what Morality he taught, nor that he was a *great and holy Prophet*, as this Author seems to own he was, but by the Authority of the *New Testament*. Consequently, whatever Doctrines he taught concerning other Points (as concerning his own Divinity, &c.) must be no less believed than his moral Doctrines. For both those other Doctrines, as well as his Morality, being deliver'd down to us, upon the Authority and Miracles of *CHRIST*, as related in the *New Testament*, no one can be a Christian in any tolerable Sense, that does not believe *CHRIST* in both. It is therefore ridiculous to believe the the *New Testament* in Moral, and not in other Points.

To



280 *A Letter upon a Book Intituled,*

To take Notice of what this Writer says afterwards (*pag. 403. seq.*) of an *infallible Rule* and *Judge* in Matters of Faith, would lead me into other Controversies, than what I have determined to stick to in these Papers, as properly belonging to the Case of Religion, between *Christians* and *Deists*. I will only say, that all he advances is easily answer'd in *Catholick* Principles. As for *Protestants*, I shall leave them to answer for themselves; tho' I must needs say, that this Author does not seem to know what even Protestants generally teach in several of the chief Points of Christianity.

Before he ends his Book, he has another Fling at the Clergy of all Denominations. This seems to be his darling *Topick*. It is observ'd by Dr. *Swift*, a Man no less noted for Wit, than clear from all Suspicion of Bigottry, that two Sort of Men are most free in their aiming to ridicule the Clergy: *Infidels*, thus to discard all Religion; and *Cowards*, by the Safety they hope for, in attacking Men, who by their Character are not likely to fight those who affront them. This may indeed, secure such Scoffers in their reviling Clergymen personally. But a general Scurrility upon the whole Order, can never secure an Author from

from the Contempt that must justly fall upon him, when he grossly fails in Decencies of common Manners, and tolerable Good-breeding.

And now, Sir, from the Remarks I have made, in as short a Way as I well could, upon this Book, I am persuaded you will wonder it could have been commended to you as an *artful* Piece in Favour of *Deism*. How a Man who perpetually affirms, there can be no Obligation of Consequence, but what appears demonstratively from the moral Truth of things, independently of *any Authority*; how one full of Inconsistencies, of false Representations of the most known Facts, and Doctrines, of the most outrageous Calumnies, and the vilest Scurrilities, can be thought to write with *Art*, I know not. And upon the Whole, even granting that a few Places of his Book may seem to have something like Sallies of Whim and Humour, and Flashes of Wit, yet the most favourable Judgment one can frame of his Work, is to affirm, that with thinking People it will at best be look'd upon as a meer *Hurlo-Thrumbo* in *Polemicks*.

As to what you hint in your Letter, about my adding some Remarks also, upon the Book Intitled, *Christianity as*  
*old*

282. *A Letter upon a Book Intitled,*  
*old as the Creation*, I can assure you, that  
upon reading it over, I find nothing in it  
that has the Appearance of Argument, but  
what has been answer'd in the *Dialogues*, and  
that the whole Book is just such a jumbled,  
inconsistent, and impious Piece, as the *Mo-*  
*ral Philosopher*. Be pleased therefore to  
excuse me from minding it any farther, and  
believe me to be,

S I R,

Your, &c.



LETTER



# LETTER II.

UPON

The MORAL PHILOSOPHER.

S I R,



THE *Second Volume* of the *Moral Philosopher* came much later to Hand than was expected; so that now my other Papers are so far advanced in the Press, as to leave me very little time for Remarks upon that strange Piece. It is well, however, that it really deserves very little Notice. Nor is this said with any contemptuous View to the Author personally. For he is so intirely unknown to me, that I have not heard who he is, by even any remote Hint.

And moreover, had I never so much time, my Remarks would be much shorten'd, by the



the Reasons which make me judge that I need not take any Notice of this Second Volume, as it is call'd an Answer to Mr. *Zeland* and Mr. *Chapman*; and that leaving them to answer for themselves (especially not having seen their Works) I ought to confine my Remarks chiefly to what he urges against reveal'd Religion or *Christianity* in General. Nor yet would this oblige me to defend Christianity, as it may happen to be understood by any sort of Men who go under the Name of *Christians*: Just, as I suppose, this Author would not think himself obliged to defend *Deism*, as it may happen to be understood by any who would be thought *Deists*.

I shall therefore, in these short Remarks, confine myself to shew, that what he says against *Christianity*, has no Force at all against *Catholicks*; who have ever been, and still are much the greatest Body of any one sort of *Christians*. And indeed it seems plain, that this Author was sensible his Arguments will not reach them who maintain that *CHRIST* has establish'd a Church which should ever be directed by an *Infalible* Assistance in her Decisions of Faith. For he all along argues on the contrary Supposition, of the Church having no *Infalible* Authority for its Support; and he  
appears

appears to be intirely of Dr. Hoadly's Opinion, who says absolutely and roundly to Dr. Hare (pag. 137.) *Nothing but Infallibility can justify receiving any Interpretation as Authoritative.* How far the *Moral Philosopher* may, upon the Supposition of a fallible Church, argue justly against others, I shall leave them to consider; while it will here be soon evident, that his Work is not at all conclusive against *Catholicks*.

Thus when immediately in his *Preface* he talks of *Doctrines to be received on the foot of Authority*, and asks, *how is this Authority proved which is to be the ground of Truth?* Why, by *Miracles*. But says he, *Miracles have no Connexion with the Truth of Doctrines, that Mr. Leland can make out*; and he adds, that Mr. Leland grounds Christianity on *human Authority*. Now whatever Mr. Leland may do, we ground it, not on *human*, but on *divine Authority*, and *Infallibility*. And the Connexion between *Miracles*, and the *Truth of Doctrines* deliver'd by that infallible Authority, is very clear. For *Christian Miracles* prove, that what *CHRIST* taught is True, by proving him a true Prophet, and that he had *divine Authority* in what he taught; since God could not give such miraculous Power as he had, for the Confirmation of  
false

false Doctrines. The Proof therefore of the Connexion between Miracles and the Truth of Doctrines, stands, in short, thus: All Doctrines are true that GOD attests: But GOD attests what is taught in his Name, when he supports the Attestation by such Powers as *CHRIST* exercised for the establishment of Christianity: Therefore the Doctrines of Christianity are true. Thus there is the plainest Connexion between Miracles and Truth of Doctrines. Nor is it less plain, that we do not intirely *set aside*, as this Author seems willing to insinuate, *the Nature and Reason of Things*, when we talk of believing upon Authority. For we affirm, that Miracles cannot prove any thing that is contrary to Reason; and that nothing is more plainly according to Reason, than to believe things that have sufficient Tokens of divine Authority to attest them, tho' the things, consider'd meerly in themselves, should appear to be never so far above the Reach of meer natural Reason when unassisted by Revelation.

It is true indeed, as this Author here says (*pag. vii.*) that *a Pretence to divine Authority*, has been a Pretence to all false Religions in the World. But it is false that *divine Authority* may *equally* serve all Purposes. Thus it is true, that a Pretence to  
Reason

Reason has been the Foundation of all *Sophisms*. But it is not true, that it may equally serve to any *sophistical* Purpose. All Religions may pretend, but Christianity alone has a real Foundation in divine Authority.

He again, in the next *Page*, mixes Truth with Falsity. It is true, that Miracles are to procure *Admission to the Prophet, and Attention to his Doctrines*. But it is not true, as he adds, that the *Jews had never known nor been taught any thing of the necessary Truth, Reason and Fitness of Things*. Nay, this is what no rational Man can be ignorant of in several Points. The evident Truths of Reason want not the Testimony of Miracles. Yet Miracles may be wanting to attest other Truths that are not evident of themselves, or above the Reach of Reason. And these may no less reasonably be deliver'd, when the Prophet is admitted on the Testimony of Miracles, than other Truths are received by meer natural Reason.

When soon after (*pag. x.*) he complains that Mr. *Leland* has not told what those Doctrines are which depend on the Authority of Miracles, and that *he might have found it difficult to have set down a List of them*, we may desire him to observe, that however difficult it may be for others to determine



determine what are the Doctrines which Christianity, as establish'd by Miracles, obliges us to believe, yet *Catholicks* can without difficulty answer; They are all such as the Church has defined. Some of the Doctrines she defines may be known from the natural Reason of things. Others could not. But both are a Part of Christianity when defined by the Church.

And when he adds (*pag. xi.*) that “ historical Parts of Scripture relating to the  
 “ Prophecies and Miracles themselves,  
 “ could not be proved by Miracles; since  
 “ these being Matters of Fact must depend  
 “ on the Testimony, and are incapable of  
 “ any other Proof.” I answer, that when Men have proved their divine Commission by Miracles, the Facts and Books which they deliver as true and from GOD, are also proved to be so by the Authority of those infallible Teachers.

Nor is there any manner of Contradiction, as he would pretend, (*pag. xiii.*) to say that Christianity is a most *rational Religion*, and at other times, that it is *above Reason*. For tho' some Parts of it are plainly grounded in Reason, yet other Articles of it are above human Reason: But then as I have already observed, it is manifestly reasonable to believe both, when we have  
 just

just Proofs that they are deliver'd by divine Authority, since it is not more evident, that three and three are six, than that we are to believe what God reveals. All the Question therefore as to our Belief, is not whether we comprehend the Doctrines, by *direct* and meer natural Reason, but whether we know them by *reflex* Reason; that is, by Authority. We come indeed to the Knowledge of this Authority partly by human, and partly by divine Means. But we do not, as he pretends (*pag.* 14.) found our Belief on *human*, but on *divine* Authority, into which we *finally* resolve our Faith. And how much soever contrary Religions may pretend a divine Authority, yet since only one can be from God, all the Question about Religion must depend on fairly considering the Proofs of a Claim to divine Authority. Where the strongest Proofs to such a Claim are found, there we must stick. For no Religion contrary to that, can be true; since we are sure, that God cannot reveal Contradictions.

This Author proceeds next to a heavy Complaint, that his Adversaries accuse him of a *criminal Infidelity*. How far he is *criminal* in it, must be left to the Searcher of Hearts. But we may assure him he is  
O quite

quite out in affirming, (*pag. xvii.*) that *Credulity and Incredulity with respect to the Judgment, or bare Assent of the Understanding, has nothing of a moral Nature in it.* For often there is a moral Fault in framing the Assent, and in want of due Consideration of the Ground upon which we judge; and where this happens, the Incredulity is criminal. He must also allow us to say, he is wrong in affirming that Intemperance, Injustice and the like, are *the only* Scripture-Sense of *Infidelity, or Unfaithfulness,* (*pag. xviii.*) For nothing is more manifest (too manifest to need any Quotations) that Infidelity in the Scripture often means the Disbelief of what GOD is pleased to reveal. It is no less plain, that such a Disbelief often affects the moral Character of Men.

From this he returns to repeat again (*pag. xix.*) his Desire, that the Gentlemen who are for *Supernatural Doctrines above the Judgment of Reason,* would tell openly and plainly, what those Doctrines are, and after what manner, or upon what rational Principles they are necessarily connected with true Religion. He then adds, that the *Shyness* of those Gentlemen in the Case, shews they have a *private Turn to serve,* which they would not have the believing

believing *Laity* look into. Whoever are *shy* in the Case with such Views, are highly criminal. But I am sure that any true *Catholick* will tell him without any *Sbyness*, that the Doctrines to be believed, are the *Trinity*, *Incarnation*, and all such as the Church has defined: And as to the rational Principle on which those Doctrines are connected with true Religion, we readily answer, it is this; whatever GOD reveals, is a Part of true Religion: But GOD reveals, all the Points which are defined by his unerring Church: Therefore, all such are Parts of true Religion. And tho', as he says, pag. xxii. *Common People are hardly capable of being made Metaphysicians and School-divines*, yet he very ungroundedly adds, that they cannot be *instructed* in the Principles of *Supernatural Religion*. For they are capable of being instructed in them, upon the Principle of an unerring Church. We see daily they are instructed in the Belief and Observance of many things, both in *Civil* and *Moral Life*, without any great *Metaphysical Knowledge* as to Particulars. And they may much more fully assent to Articles of Belief and Practice, on a well-grounded infallible Authority.

When therefore in the next Page he says, Religion is a thing *clear and adequate to the*



*Capacity of Men*, this is only true as to some Parts of it. But other Parts of it (even of the moral Parts) are far from being so clear to the Generality of Men. On the contrary, many Points of Morality are, and must be received upon Authority. You otherwise confine moral Duties to narrow Bounds, and leave the World full of Disorders. In many things the common People, and indeed all People, must go by what may be call'd, if you please, *implicit* and *blind* Obedience to Civil or Ecclesiastical Superiors. But if by *blind*, this Philosopher means *unreasonable*, he is again quite out. For tho' in some respects that Obedience may be call'd *blind*, as to not seeing the direct Reasonableness of the things, by demonstrative Deductions from first Principles, yet it is very reasonable to admit them as they are grounded upon due Authority.

But what has been said on his *Preface* (omitting several other Remarks) I have sufficiently obviated what he objects (*pag. xxviii.*) to Mr. *Leland* and Mr. *Chapman*, that *they never once come to the main Points in Debate*. The first of these Points, he says, is the *Infallibility of Scripture*; the second, what are *determinately* the Doctrines of *reveal'd Religion*. For in *Catholick Principles*,

ciples, both these are plainly decided. We ascertain what that Faith is which we oppose to *Infidelity*. For we plainly ascertain it to be the Belief of all Points defined by the Church. And when he says, *pag. 2. the Reasonableness, Necessity and Importance of Revelation-Faith ought to be proved*, we answer; it ought so, and we prove it by the Reasonableness of believing what we see God has been pleased to teach us by the Authority of his un-erring Church.

It is granted then, that if *any plain Proofs of Errors* in the sacred Writers can be given, it will be enough to set aside their *divine Authority*, as he says, *pag. 3.* But then we deny he has Reason to add, that *nothing can be plainer*, than that there is no such thing as *Historical Infallibility*. The Reason he gives is strangely weak. It is only this; that *all Men are liable to Error*. They are so indeed, when left to themselves. But they are not so, when under the divine Assistance to secure them from Error. And if he will ask us how we know the sacred Writers were so assisted, we answer, that we know it by the Authority of that Church, against which *CHRIST* has promised, the Gates of Hell shall never prevail. And to pretend (as this Author

does, *pag. 4.*) that we cannot justly believe any Doctrines, but only as far as *they bring their own Credentials with them, in the intrinsick moral Character and Stamp of Divinity, and not upon the Credit, or Authority of any Historical Vouchers, or living decisive Judges whatsoever*, this is bringing both Points of Morality and of Religion, to a narrow Compass, as I observed before, and destructive of civil Government, and manifestly against common Reason. For Reason leads us to the Belief and Practice of many things, in which we do not see the Stamp of Reason and Divinity, by the immediate Perception that the things themselves are evidently deduced from first Principles.

Where next this Author pretends (*pag. 5.*) that no Authority can be proved to be divine by Miracles, it is strange to observe how he argues. *Miracles*, says he, *could no more prove the divine Authority of Moses or CHRIST, than of Ægyptian Sorcerers*. What? Will he pretend there was not manifestly a greater Power shew'd in *Moses* and *CHRIST*, than in those *Sorcerers*? Does he not often own, that the Miracles of *CHRIST* proved him to have been a true Prophet? Does not *CHRIST* appeal

appeal to them as Proofs of it? Could he thus appeal to them if nothing can be testified by Miracles, but meerly what is of itself evidently deduced by natural Reason? And if a Commission from GOD can be proved by Miracles, it is evident, that such a Commission as includes a Preservation from Error, can be so attested; and that this being so attested, we are certain of the Doctrines deliver'd by Men, under such an Assistance of GOD, tho' the Doctrines taught by Persons so assisted, be otherwise far above the Reach of meer natural Reason.

As nothing can be more injurious to the Miracles of *CHRIST*, or more contrary to what *CHRIST* says of his Miracles, or more inconsistent with what this *Moral Philosopher* says of *CHRIST*, so he need not have given so strong a Proof as he does presently after (*pag. 6.*) to convince us how weak a Reasoner he is. It is an Argument he repeats several times (as he does indeed almost every thing) and seems to think very smart. Prepare yourself for a wonderful Piece of *Metaphysick*. For here this *speculative* Author will tell you, *Truth is prior in Nature to all Authority, and therefore Authority cannot be the prior Ground and Reason of Truth.* But tho' we may let him say,  
O 4 that



that Truth is prior in Nature, yet, sure he will not say, that all our Knowledge of Truth must be prior to all Authority. Truth is prior to Teaching. Will he infer from thence, that Teaching cannot be any prior Means or Ground of our learning any Truth? Why then may not the Authority of a divine Teacher be the Ground and Reason of our Belief? Truth, tho' prior in Nature, may very easily be posterior with regard to us, or to our Knowledge and Faith. And when this *Philosopher* adds, *these things* (of the Priority of Truth) *are so very strong and clear*, that his Adversary could not meddle with the Principles themselves, I fear I must rather say, these things are so very weak, that I ought not to have taken the Pains to give them an Answer.

Perhaps I may well be under the same Fear, upon taking Notice of what he presently adds, that *we cannot explain what Revelation is, or give any Idea of it*. If, says he, *Revelation consists in the moral Doctrines and Obligations of Scripture, all Morality will be Revelation; or if it consists in Historical Facts, all History will be Revelation*. A little of School-Divinity (of which he speaks with great Contempt, tho' he has not shew'd great Knowledge of it)

it) would inform him, that Revelation, as here spoken of, is any Point, whether Moral or Historical, that has the Stamp of God's Authority in the Conveyance of it. It would then farther inform him, that consequently neither all Morality, nor all History is Revelation, but only such Points of either as are made known to us by divine Authority. For tho' some Points of either may be made known by natural Reason, or meer human Authority, yet, *as such*, they are not the Revelation we here speak of, but are *so* only, when consider'd as stamp'd with the Authority of God. Nor can any thing be more plainly false, than what he here pretends, that both *the Learned and Unlearned* have commonly taken Revelation, for Doctrines *never known before, and above human Reason*. On the contrary, both the Learned and Unlearned have frequently taken it, for the Conveyance of such things as are made known to us under the Stamp of divine Authority, tho' some might have been known by human Reason or Authority.

In the next Paragraph (*pag. 7.*) he tells us, that *CHRIST* declares he came not to destroy the *Moral Law of Moses*, or to introduce *any new Religion*. But will this

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Gentleman pretend, that *CHRIST* taught nothing but what the Law of *Moses* taught? This would be plainly contradicting himself. For he often says, that *Moses* and the Prophets before *Daniel*, taught nothing of future Rewards or Punishments, and he frequently speaks of the Law of *Moses*, as being in many things defective, and in many even contrary to Morality. And *CHRIST* often declares, he came to teach a more perfect Law than that of *Moses*. *St. Paul* too, is so far from maintaining what this Writer here attributes to him, that *no new Religion or Revelation was intended to be set up*, that he frequently implies, and says the contrary. And, by the by, when this Author here says, that *St. Paul* was *the only Apostle* that had any Authority or Commission to preach the Gospel to the *Gentiles*, we may well ask him, how he could forget that *CHRIST* expressly says, speaking to his Apostles in general, *Go preach the Gospel to all*. We must be allow'd to add farther, that if *CHRIST* and *St. Paul*, had thought of the Law of *Moses* as this Author does, they should have declared, that altho' there was some good Morality in it, yet upon the Whole, his Law was not only imperfect, but in  
many

many things against Truth and Morality, and *Moses* himself a very grand *Impostor*.

Having already observ'd, that Historical Points, when under the Seal of GOD's sacred Authority, are no less to be received than moral Doctrines, what this Author says (*pag. 8.*) of *Historical Faith*, is manifestly false; and his adding (*p. 9.*) that *Historical Faith may distinguish between a wise Man and a Fool, but never between a good Man and a bad*, may perhaps seem to him a smart Saying; but it is at the Bottom a very empty one. For it is manifest, that the Belief or Disbelief of Facts, makes also a great Distinction between a good or bad Man, when the Belief is given upon good Grounds, or refused upon the Influence of wilful Prejudices.

As to this *Gentleman's* professing solemnly, here at the End of his *Introduction*, that he had no other Aim in his Work but *Truth, Peace and Righteousness*, we must leave the Sincerity of his Profession to the Searcher of Hearts. But most certainly it would have been more to the Credit of his Judgment, to have own'd he was only in *jest*, than to have been serious in urging such weak things, and in so unbecoming a Manner, as he does in both his Volumes

And



And now upon the Body of his Book I shall (as I have done hitherto) rather insist upon refuting his general Principles, than on what he says of the Historical Parts of *Scripture*: And this for two Reasons. First, because general Principles being what is most to be regarded (especially in one who sets up for a *Philosophical Reasoner*) when these are shew'd to be frivolous, his whole Attempt against Christianity must appear so too. Secondly, because the Difficulties he urges against the Historical Part of *Scripture*, are more properly the Province of *Commentators*, and are abundantly refuted by them.

With Regard then to his general Principle, we must desire him to remember, that he plainly says (*pag. 18.*) that *Truth in Fact*, may be manifested to us by our Senses, *under such Circumstances of Persons, Facts, and Objects, as leave no room to doubt of any Deception.* Where therefore we have such a Concurrence as leaves no Doubt of any Deception, we have a rational Ground to believe the Truths are attested by unquestionable Miracles; we have consequently Reason to judge they are grounded on divine Authority. When therefore again, this Gentleman says, *p. 2 L.*

*we*

we ought to prove the supposed Authority by some Principle antecedent to any Considerations of the Truth, Reason, or Fitness of Things, or Actions, we answer, that we prove it by this Principle; whatever is grounded on Proofs that Men are commission'd from God to teach, and assisted by him in teaching us Infallibly, is grounded on divine Authority; and Miracles are a Proof of such a Commission, antecedently to any Consideration of the Truth of Things deliver'd by such *divine Commissioners*. Much after the Manner as we may be sufficiently convinced of Men having a *Legal Commission*, before we see demonstratively the Fitness of the things, consider'd in themselves, which are commanded by Virtue of the Commission. Nor is there any need to remark upon what he here repeats again, that *Truth is of its own Nature prior to all Authority*. It has been already observed, that however Truth is prior in itself, yet it may be posterior with regard to us. And this alone well consider'd, will readily answer the *Sophism* which runs through his whole Book.

Nor can any thing be more false, than what he says (*pag. 23.*) that *CHRIST* and his

his *Apostles* appeal'd *always* to the intrinsic Reason and Fitness of things. It is evident they often appeal'd to Miracles. And when he says (*pag. 26.*) nothing can be plainer, than that Miracles can be no Proof of a Commission, nothing, I am sure, can be a plainer Contradiction to *CHRIST*. For *CHRIST* evidently appeals to them as a Proof of his Commission. But tho' *CHRIST* did so, this *Philosopher* will not allow the Proof, because, says he, the *Ægyptian* Sorcerers wrought great Miracles, and might have done any thing within the *Compass* of *Power*. But what *Power* does he mean? The Devil's? He has none, or can use none, but by the Permission of *GOD*. And *GOD* cannot permit his *Power* to be used in such Circumstances, as must make Error appear manifestly better attested than Truth, in a Contest about a divine Commission. This Author seems fond of his *Sorcerers*. But the Argument from them has been so often confuted, that it is strange he will offer to repeat it.

What he says (*pag. 28.*) against the Credibility of the *Hebrew* Historians, that there appears in them *every where*, a *Prejudice in Favour of their own Nation*, is what

what no Man can say more inconsistently than this Author. For it is from those Historians that he pretends to take the Accounts he himself gives of the *Jews*. And we may safely leave any one to judge, whether the Faults and Crimes they are charged with by their own Historians, are not strong Marks of Impartiality. And this Remark will readily answer a great Part of his Objections to the Sacred History. As indeed he is generally so obliging as to lay down such Principles, or give such Hints, as make it very easy to answer all his Arguments. Tho' it must be own'd, the Favour would be much greater, if his Arguments were otherwise such as contain any great Difficulty.

The five general Considerations which he proposes, *pag.* 30. against Miracles being any Proof of Religion, have been often answer'd at large; and sufficiently in the *Dialogues*. If he will not think so, let him be satisfied with the Refutation he himself has given. He has already said, that Facts may be manifested *beyond all Doubt of Deception*. This being supposed, it is frivolous to object, as he here does. First, that our Senses are liable to Deceptions; or Secondly, our Ignorance of the  
full



full Extent of natural Powers ; or Thirdly, to doubt of the Testimonies by which Miracles are convey'd down to us. For talk as much as you please of the Errors of our Senses, of our Ignorance of occult Causes, or the Fallibility of Historians, it will still be a Folly to reject the most authentick Histories. And sure such Facts as cannot be doubted of without *Folly*, are sufficient to induce us to a rational Belief. Fourthly, It is true, that *Prodigies* may require a closer Examination than other Facts. But when they have been so examin'd, they require no less an Assent. And Fifthly, It is granted, God will not work Miracles without *some Motive of Importance*. But when the Facts are unquestionable, it is evident the Motive is also unquestionably of Importance. Just as we are sure, that the present Constitution of the World is framed upon Motives unquestionably just in themselves, tho' we cannot account for them in all Particulars. And even this Gentleman, presently after those five *Lemmata*, as he calls them, against Miracles being any Proof of Religion, expressly owns (*pag. 33.*) that the Miracles of *CHRIST* proved him to be no Impostor, but *a true Prophet, and Favourite of God*. How could they prove  
this,

this; if they could not be distinguish'd from the Tricks of *Sorcerers*? An Author who thus confutes himself cannot be a formidable Enemy to Christianity.

It may be true that, as he says immediately after, Miracles were requisite to gain the Attention of the People to *CHRIST*. But it is manifestly wrong to add, that when *CHRIST* had gain'd due Attention, *his Doctrines carried their own Conviction with them, by their native Light*. For it is evident, that many Points of his Doctrine were both then, and are still very hard to believe, consider'd directly in themselves only, and when he says (*pag. 42.*) that we hear very little of Miracles wrought when *St. Paul* preach'd the Gospel to the *Gentiles*, and that he did not appeal to *Moses* and the Prophets for Conviction, but preach'd a Gospel and Doctrines to them *that forced Conviction as soon as they came to be duly consider'd*, the most favourable thing we can say of this Author is, that his Memory fail'd him strangely, for *St. Paul* often appeals to Miracles; and the Gospel he preach'd is so far from carrying its Conviction with it, that *St. Paul* expressly says, it appear'd a Folly to the *Gentiles*. It is own'd that  
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the Gospel, if duly consider'd *in all its Proofs*, carries Conviction. But consider'd only as far as the Evidence of things in themselves will lead Men, independently of Miracles and Authority, it neither did, nor does carry such a Conviction.

What follows (in his second Section) is such a Ridicule of the *Jews* and their History, as cannot possibly deserve any Answer. If it could, he has suggested what will shew, that all his Ridicule is void of all Argument. His Ridicule is grounded on the *Jews* having a Notion, that the God of *Israel* was a *local, tutelar God*. Yet in the same pag. 62. he tells the Reader, *that no doubt Moses and the Prophets after him, had just Notions enough of God, and of his spiritual divine Perfections*. This is just as if he had said:  
 “ Observe, Reader, and though you might  
 “ think by some Strokes of my Pen,  
 “ which runs on at any Rate, that I would  
 “ prove the Law of *Moses* was made up  
 “ of wrong Notions of God, yet if you  
 “ mind what I here say, you will plainly  
 “ see I do not mean, that the *Law* was,  
 “ but that the *People* were bad. For  
 “ in the Law and Law-giver, there ap-  
 “ pear, *no doubt*, right Notions of God.  
 “ And

“ And therefore what I say of the People,  
“ ple, is nothing to the Purpose against  
“ the Law. Remember this, and you  
“ will see that nothing, I here say, affects  
“ the Law, or proves any thing, at  
“ all.”

And when he comes to speak again (pag. 65.) of the Miracles of *Moses*, I will only say, that let him suppose the People to be as void of Reason, as their Horses and Asses (which is the Compliment he makes them) yet unless he also supposes them to have had neither Eyes, nor Ears, nor Feeling, what he says of the Miracles of *Moses* cannot be of any Moment. And I am very sure, that any sensible Reader will think, that what he says of a Passage between the *Mediterranean* and the *Red-Sea*, out of *Ægypt* into *Arabia*, could only be to shew his Learning in *Geography*. For as to the *Jews*, however ignorant he will suppose they were in *Geography*, there is nothing of Argument in what he here says, unless he will say, they had neither Eyes to see the Water of the Sea on each Side of them, nor could see, or hear of the *Ægyptians* being drowned by the Sea returning to its Course.

He



He then proceeds to tell you (*pag. 68.*) that his great Learning has inform'd him of some Difficulties concerning the Authors, and Order of some of the *Biblical* Books. But then he kindly lets you know, that those Difficulties are nothing to the Purpose of the main Argument. For the Point is not, whether the Scripture has no Difficulties, but whether it is not as credible in general, as other Histories. That it is so, cannot be denied. He argues from it as being so. Now the Credibility of Scripture Histories, as much as of others, being supposed, the only Question is, whether the miraculous Facts they relate are a rational ground of Belief that the things, for which those Wonders were wrought, have the Stamp of divine Authority. This we affirm. Not as if we had any such wild Notion (which he is pleased to suppose of us, *pag. 45.*) as if we thought divine Authority is *founded* on human Authority; but that we are lead by human Authority to discover a divine Authority in the Miracles related by the most credible Historians. The divine Authority in itself, is founded on nothing but the intrinsic Perfections of GOD.

But

But human Authority may be a rational Inducement, to observe and believe a divine Authority in confirming Religion.

“ But says he (*pag. 70.*) supposing all  
“ those Miracles to have been wrought,  
“ I would only ask, *cui bono*, for what  
“ Good or Purpose were they done? Why  
“ only to destroy one Nation, the *Æ-*  
“ *gyptians*, to enable the *Israelites* to  
“ destroy another Nation, the *Canaanites*,  
“ - - - - without Mercy or Humanity.”

The true Answer is very plain from the Scripture itself. They were done to punish the Sins of the *Ægyptians* and *Canaanites*, to shew the Justice and Power of God, and for many other Reasons known to his inscrutable Providence. And it must needs be strange, if this Writer does not see, that he must give the like Answer to *Atheists* when they ask, *to what Purpose* did a God of infinite Goodness give Men a Power of doing Evil, or to destroy one another, as they often do? This Writer here calls the *Israelites* by the Name of *divine Butchers and Conquerors*. What would he say to an *Atheist* that should call the Bloody Conquerors, who have so often appear'd in the World, by those Names?

It

It would signify nothing to his Purpose to say, that in one Case a divine *Command* is pretended, in the other only a *Permission*. For GOD can no more permit, than he can command such things without just Reasons. We cannot fully account for all the Reasons either of a *Permission* or a *Command*. But as we can prove the Being of GOD without being able to account fully for every thing that exists in Fact, so we can prove the Credibility of the *Biblical* Histories, without being able to account fully for all the Reasons of every Fact which they relate.

I will only add one Reflexion more upon the Miracles of the *Old Testament*. St. *Paul*, on whom this Author pretends he will rely, speaks of them as real Miracles, and Stiles *Moses* (as I observed in the first Letter) *the Faithful Servant of GOD*. This Author indeed now denies the Epistle to the *Hebrews* to be St. *Paul's*. But in his first Volume he quoted it as the *Apostle's*. And whoever wrote it, it is of as much Authority as any Part of the *New Testament*. Moreover, supposing it is not St. *Paul* that there gives *Moses* that Title, Yet he alleges his Miracles without ever warning us of any Imposture in them.

Now

Now if *St. Paul* was what this Author calls him, *The great Free-Thinker* of his Age, and a sincere Preacher of true Religion, he should not have temporized, and spoken of those Miracles and of *Moses* as he did, but ought to have told the People in plain Terms, that *Moses* was an Impostor, and the Miracles false, if he had judged of them as this Writer does. He must therefore give up *St. Paul*, as he does *Moses*, if he will be consistent with himself. But it every where appears this Gentleman has no miraculous Gift of Self-Consistency.

From what I have hitherto said, added to the precedent Letter, it will be easy to answer all he says in this Volume. And since I am press'd with time, I will add but a few farther Remarks. Thus when (*pag. 127.*) he pretends, the Command given to *Abraham* is so contrary to the Law of Nature, and the Perfections of GOD, that *it must be unreasonable and incredible*; we may desire him to remember: First, That thus also *Atheists* say, That several things in the Constitution of the World are so contrary to the Idea of a GOD, that the Existence of GOD is incredible. Secondly, that among the Perfections of  
of



of GOD, one is, an absolute Dominion over our Lives. Consequently, he could justly deprive *Isaac* of his Life, and command *Abraham* to do it. Thirdly, that *St. Paul* commends *Abraham* in the Case; which shews, that *St. Paul* did not think it unreasonable and incredible.

Let it be observed farther, that this Author adds within a few Lines, “ It  
 “ may be supposed indeed, that in the  
 “ short imperfect Account of this Affair,  
 “ there may have been some original  
 “ Circumstances relating to it, left out,  
 “ which might have clear’d the whole  
 “ Matter, and render’d the Story very  
 “ reasonable and credible.” If he will please to remember these his own Words, he will see an Answer to most of his Objections against the Histories of Holy Scripture. For, no doubt, many Difficulties would be clear’d, if GOD had not been pleased to leave many things, both in Scripture and in Nature, under Obscurities. As to this Author’s (*pag. 128.*) supposing we think GOD gave that Command to *Abraham*, to try what he would do, as if GOD did not know as well without it; we must needs say, it is strange how a Man professing to deal fairly, can  
 offer

offer to insinuate as if we were guilty of imagining any such thing in the Case

I would next desire him to read over these few Lines of his own (*pag.* 135.) “ It “ is very plain to me - - - - - that *Moses* “ brought the *Jews* to the Notion of the “ Unity, Spirituality, and Invisibilty of “ the true God.” He then adds, that *Moses* “ made the true God only the “ residential God of that Country.” And this, he says, *Moses* did out of Motives of Interest. A strange Censure! But the Sting of it is taken away by the Contradiction here advanced. For it is clearly impossible to bring People to the Notion of *the Spirituality of the true God*, and at the same time to make them believe the true God to be only the residential God of one Country. It is the great Sign of a poor Philosopher, to be often laying down Self-Contradictions, tho’ at a considerable Distance in a large Book. What must it be, to do it in the Compass of so few Lines, as we see here?

The strange Misrepresentations and wretched Reasonings that follow in this Author’s *Sixth Section*, especially concerning *David*, are such as cannot be particularly remark’d upon, without giving such

a Notion of this Writer, as I am unwilling to express. Yet if I was to be particular on the vile Reflexions he here makes, I would not say of him, as he does of *David* (pag. 182.) *Away with him to the Devil from whence he came.* Such Elegancies are very singular, and must be left to such moral Philosophers only as this.

Upon his *next Section* also, to avoid exposing him more than I care to do, I will only observe, that whatever is argumentative in it, is reduced to this Question (pag. 193.) How could GOD have a particular Hand, inspiring the Prophets in their Declarations in his Name, in order to destroy Idolatry, *without any regard to the Event, and in Effect, to strengthen Idolatry more and more?* We may much better ask; what is this but an *Atheistical* Argument? For just so *Atheists* ask, How could GOD frame Man for his Love and Service, *without any Regard to the Event*, and so as to have Misery and Vice, *in Effect, strengthen'd more and more?* In both Cases the Answer is, that GOD permits nothing without Regard to the Events, which he fully foresees; but for just Reasons permits Men to choose Good or Evil by their Free-Will; because it is

agree-

agreeable to his Goodness and Wisdom to create them with the Endowment of Liberty; and agreeable to his Justice, to punish them for the ill Use of so great a Gift. And in this, as in many other Instances, what I observed in the *Dialogues* is plain, that frequently the Arguments of *Deists* can be finally resolved into nothing but *Atheism*, or must be answer'd by *Deists* themselves. And upon the Whole, the more one considers this Author in his vehement Inclination to attack Christianity, his strange Misrepresentations, his unbecoming Ridicule, his Self-Inconsistencies, and using such Arguments as he must also answer, if he would refute *Atheists*, the more he appears incapable of being a formidable Man to Christian Religion.

As to his pretending (*pag.* 217.) that the first of the *Jewish* Writers that speaks of a future Life is *Daniel*, it will suffice to say, that the contrary often appears from Scripture, whereas we do not find the least Appearance of that People wondering at the Newness of so important a Doctrine in *Daniel*, as they must needs have done, if it had never been taught them before.



In the Eighth *Section* he says, that according to all the Prophecies concerning the *Messias*, he was to be a great *Temporal Prince*; and that *this is so evident, that he would scorn to dispute with a Man who would deny it.* It seems then he would scorn to dispute with any *Christian*. For he knows they all deny it. But he may be assured they will be no farther concern'd at his Scorn, than to wish him more humble Sentiments. To that charitable Wish they will add another, desiring him to remember, that he OWES *CHRIST* to be a true Prophet, and that *CHRIST* often declares himself to be the *Messias* whom the Prophets foretold. Hence let the *Moral Philosopher* ponder this Argument. *CHRIST* affirms himself to be the *Messias* whom the Prophets foretold: But *CHRIST* disclaims the Character of such a temporal Prince as this Author pretends is the *essential Character* of the *Messias*, according to the Prophets: Consequently, this Author mistakes the prophetic Character of the *Messias*, or *CHRIST* mistook it. It is still to be hoped, this *Gentleman* will not say he understands the Prophets better than *CHRIST* did.

There

There follows in that *Section*, such an empty Ridicule of the *Gift of Tongues*, which was bestow'd on the *Apostles* at *Pentecost*, as cannot deserve to be confuted by any Pen or Tongue; and which most certainly never came from any Pen before this Author was pleased to expose himself. Instead of saying any thing upon it to expose him farther, I will only desire him to remember, that *Page* 236, he says: *Curing Distempers by a Touch, or Word of Command, must be allow'd to be very extraordinary and miraculous.* Let him then tell us, with what Consistency he denies we can be reasonably convinced of any Miracle. Must things be *allow'd to be miraculous*, tho' we cannot reasonably believe that any thing is miraculous?

His two last *Sections*, being press'd for Time, I pass over unheeded. I will only observe, that what he says of our Redemption by *CHRIST*, has no Appearance of Argument against the *Catholick* Doctrine on that Point. For we neither suppose any Communication of *Personal* Merit, nor any such Merit in *CHRIST* as to supersede the Obligation of Repentance for Sin; as plainly appears from what has been said in the Letter on his first Volume.

As to this *Gentleman's* Letter to Mr. *Chapman*, all that is material in it may be reduced to two Heads, in which it will be easy to shew how much he is mistaken. The *First* is of the Necessity of Christianity, as distinct from meer Natural Religion. He argues that it is shocking to say all are damn'd who do not believe in *CHRIST*, tho' they have observed all the Law of Nature; and on the other Hand, that Christianity is not worth disputing about if it is not necessary to Salvation. But the Answer is very easy. We do not say that any are damn'd for not believing in *CHRIST*, unless they have been criminal in neglecting the Means of knowing him. As to those who have never been guilty of any Crime in that Regard, if they have also observed all the Laws of natural Religion, we say, that Providence will give them the Gift of Faith, so far as is requisite to verify what the Scripture says, that there is no Name *by which Men can be saved*, but that of *CHRIST*, and the express Words of *CHRIST* himself, that who does not believe *shall be condemn'd*. And this Gentleman must remember, that the Question between *Christians* and *Deists*, is not whether

whether there is any Salvation for such as are invincibly and inculpably ignorant of *CHRIST*, but whether Christianity, when known and duly examined, has sufficient Proofs of its being a divine Revelation.

Secondly, He pretends, “ It would be  
“ arguing against Fact and common Ex-  
“ perience, to say that God in his Wis-  
“ dom and Goodness could never suffer  
“ any Cheat or Imposture from Miracles  
“ to pass, without controlling them with  
“ more and greater Miracles set against  
“ them ; for it is certain that God has  
“ suffer’d, and still does suffer the greatest  
“ Part of the World to be thus deluded.”

But here again the Answer is very easy. For it is plain that no Religion has had so many and so great Miracles for its Proof, as Christianity. As to those who have never heard of the Christian Miracles, which would have fully controll’d all their pretended Miracles for any other Revelation contrary to *Christianity*, I have just now said how their Case stands as to the Necessity of Belief in *CHRIST*.

To conclude: This Author tells Mr. *Chapman*, that he will not take Notice of some things in him, *as not being*, says he, *at all inclined to ridicule, while talking with you.*



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I can very sincerely assure this *Gentleman*, that I shall never be inclined to ridicule, while talking with him of Religion, as long as he speaks of it with that Decency which ought to be observed on such a Subject: And that I am sorry a proper Censure and Reproof upon what he says upon it in his two Volumes, obliged me to some Reflections which I should have been very glad to have had no just Reason to have made. With this sincere Declaration, I remain both his, and

S I R,

*Your, &c.*



F I N I S.



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## E R R A T A.

PAGE 14. Line 1. *after* have, *add* not. p. 54.  
l. 22. *after* arguing, *add* see they. p. 204. l. 25.  
*last Word*, *read* including. p. 268. l. 26. *for* Incon-  
sistence, *read* Instance. p. 281. l. 12. *for* Consequence,  
*read* Conscience. p. 287. l. 20. *for* deliver'd, *read*  
believed. p. 292. l. 22. *for* But, *read* By.

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E R R A T A

PAGE 14. Line 1. after line add not p. 14  
Line 2. after line add not p. 14  
Line 3. after line add not p. 14  
Line 4. after line add not p. 14  
Line 5. after line add not p. 14  
Line 6. after line add not p. 14  
Line 7. after line add not p. 14  
Line 8. after line add not p. 14  
Line 9. after line add not p. 14  
Line 10. after line add not p. 14

